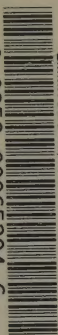


AN ITALIAN  
HOLIDAY &  
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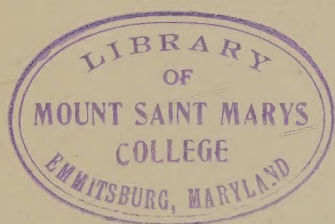
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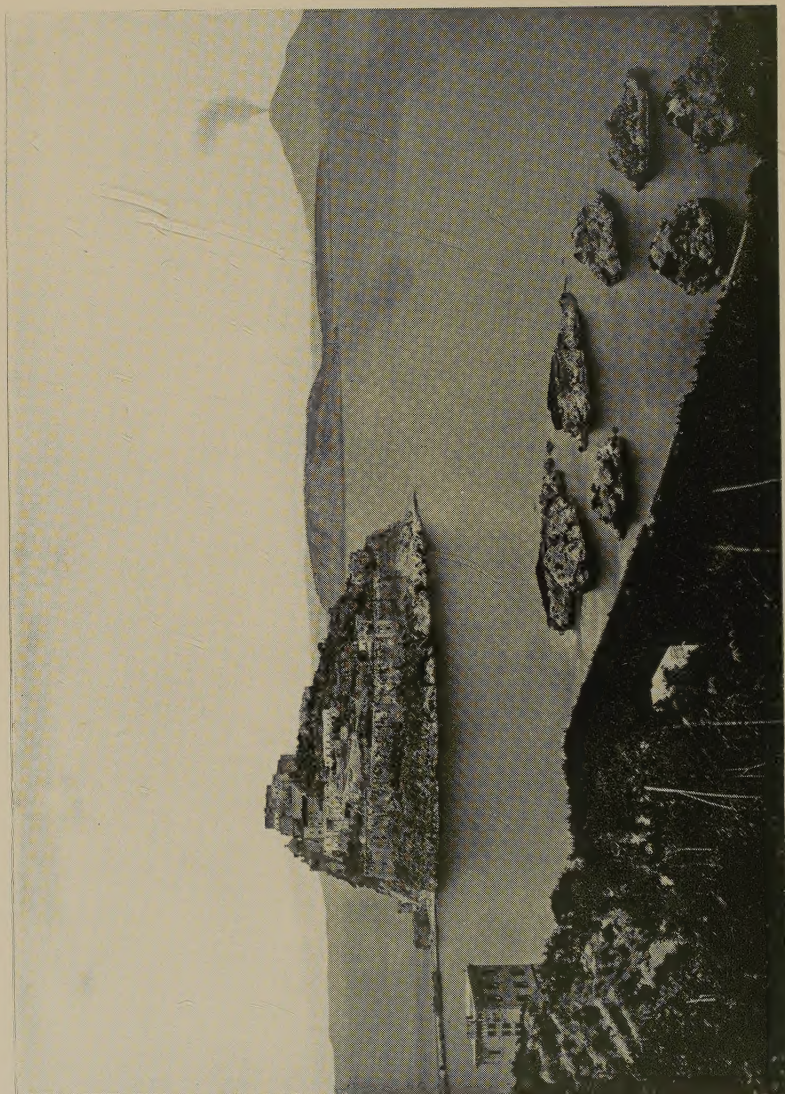
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RICHARD MANSFIELD, THE MAN AND  
THE ACTOR









*Photo by Brogi*

### The Bay of Naples

In the foreground the little island artificially connected with the island of Ischia. The castle and fortifications were built by Alphonso V of Aragon.



# AN ITALIAN HOLIDAY

BY  
PAUL WILSTACH

AUTHOR OF  
ALONG THE PYRENEES  
ISLANDS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED



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AN ITALIAN HOLIDAY





# AN ITALIAN HOLIDAY

## CHAPTER I

### A SINGER'S CITY

THE BAY OF NAPLES—NATURE'S FRONT DOORS—MODERN BACK DOORS—ISCHIA, POZZUOLI, NISIDA—WHERE THE ANCIENT ROMAN ARISTOCRATS HAD THEIR VILLAS—THE NAPLES CARUSO KNEW—SAINT JOHNNY OF THE EIGHT CORNS—THE GREAT TENOR'S BEGINNINGS—HIS CLIMB TO FAME—HISSED AT THE SAN CARLO—VOWS NEVER TO SING AT NAPLES AGAIN—AT HOME ON THE HILL

THE great ship stood up to the east. Before us there was only the aquamarine blue of the Mediterranean and the azure blue of the cloudless sky. Within us was expectation. Our hearts were on tiptoe. The forward galleries under the captain's bridge were packed with eager passengers, and every eye was fixed on the horizon. It was a question should we see first the white cliffs of Capri, the elephantine gray of Ischia's flanks or the smoky spiral of Vesuvius. For we were coming to Italy by the Bay of Naples.

This is the front door to Italy, the majestic

portal, the way history led in its procession from the beginning, the most beautiful harbor setting in the world. Nature herself is unchanging, and the Bay of Naples, except perhaps for the varying line of habitations, is just as the first wayfarers found it incalculable centuries before the Æolians came a thousand years before our era. The ages have not altered the beauty, and they have adorned with legend, but Italy no longer receives her major influx by the front door. Now her guests filter in along the golden Riviera and across the hoary Alps.

That is one of the anomalies of a railway age. The glorious entrances arranged by nature are no longer the frequented way into most cities and countries. Venice receives a few ships a week at the sea steps of the exquisite piazzetta, while every day a score or more of trains drag their passengers in across marshes and through slums. Once great Cadiz blinks lonely and lazy while the new barbarians, guide-book in hand, overrun Spain across the Pyrenees. For one ship that rides up the gallant bay to New York's front door, a hundred trains burrow under and arrive in its cellars. The argonauts came to San Francisco through its Golden Gate, but now all its golden visitors are ferried across the back bay from the ends of transcontinental steel ribbons. The natural front door to England is up the Thames to London; to Holland it is up the Maas to Rotterdam; to Greece by



the Ægean Sea and Phaleron Bay to Athens; to Turkey by the sea of Marmora to Constantinople. Wheel travel, by train and automobile, has changed the approach for most people, but it has not changed the fact that tracks and tunnels lead only to back doors and cellar doors, with the loss of the spectacle at the approaches devised by Nature.

Capri and Ischia are the twin guards of the doorway to Naples. There need have been no question of which first would raise its head above the horizon, for the ship had borne us directly out of the west; through the gates of the Mediterranean at Gibraltar; along the Andalusian coast of Spain in full sight of the snowy crests of the Sierra Nevada; and during a moonless evening, past the lights on the Sardinian capes where the Alps struggle farthest south across the Middle Sea.

Approaching Naples this way, it is Ischia which rises first to orientate the approach. Capri hides below the horizon some sixteen miles southeast. The archipelago leading up to Pozzuoli parades its beauty and its wonders along our left, Ischia seeming to turn on its own pivot as the ship steams on, until, past the promontory of San Pancrazio, it reveals its seaport opposite Vittoria Colonna's island castle rising like a fairy casket in the narrow strait. Procida, next, is Oriental with its white flat-roofed houses gleaming on green slopes, and so low that it seems only the fore-

ground of the tumbling mountains of the peninsula itself. Lurking behind it, but at the sea-level and so unseen, are the ruins of Cumæ, an outpost of continental history, the first Greek settlement in Italy, the source of Sybilline sorcery, and the earliest fountain of Roman culture.

Once past the tufa rock of Cape Miseno, the Gulf of Pozzuoli exposes its amphitheater of mountain-sides. This was the favorite resort of patrician Rome. Here were their loveliest seaside temples and baths and academies. Here were the villas of Lucullus, Julius Cæsar and Hadrian; of Nero and of his mother Agrippina; of Cicero and of Horace. Midway gleams the little town which gives its name to the gulf, sordid now but once the most important commercial city in Italy and the port which gave St. Paul entry on his way to Rome. The broad inlet terminates at a high flat rock which holds attention when it is authenticated as the island of Nisida, where Marcus Brutus lived and where he bade his Portia farewell as he sailed off to fatal Philippi. Beyond, somewhere on the hillsides which plunge abruptly to the water, is the site of Virgil's villa, and a ruin is offered as the remains of the Roman singer's tomb.

Yet, in passing it, all this sinks to the level of a mere detail in the vast circumference of the entire Bay of Naples which has risen above the horizon and surrounds the ship. Along the hills of Posilipo the

water-line of huts and villas clusters into an almost unbroken line of villages which climbs from the shore to the heights and forms beyond into the mass which is terraced Naples itself.

A flat plain separates the great city from the cone of Vesuvius, and one need never have been here before to know that at its farther base are the eloquent ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Farther on the arc of the shore rises in gray cliffs from Castellammare to the Cape of Sorrento, where it dips to rise at once in the indented silhouette of Capri, which curiously appears first when it is fairly astern.

This seaward approach to Naples on a cloudless sunny day when the Mediterranean light picks out every object and brings it almost telescopically near—the blue dancing water, the varied shipping, the islands, the mountains, the terraces of vines and olives and the black sprays of the umbrella-topped pines, the white and pink and blue and ocher buildings, the arches and ramps and castles and towers, the familiar smoking cone of Vesuvius ahead, the air voluble with the tinkling of donkey bells along the curved marina and the clamor of church bells from all directions—is one of the most exhilarating experiences vouchsafed the wayfarer.

It is quite another picture and quite another experience if the elements are adverse. The Italians may say: "See Naples and die," but on sunless days



more than one visitor has added, "of chagrin." Naples is as temperamental as the Neapolitans, and neither is less temperamental than the weather. "*Senza sole senza niente* (without sunshine nothing)" is often on their apologetic lips. It may as often be a city of disappointment as delight, a city "beautiful and damned." A Neapolitan, practised like all his compatriots in the art of phrasing, said on the steamer by which he was returning home on a visit—after having filled his pockets in the *New World*—"Yes, mebbe, for scenery and history Naples is a gold mine; but for a place to live it is a gold brick." Yet an incorrigible hard-boiled optimist insists it is "interesting even when ugliest."

The truth is that though Naples is most beautiful as a sunlit spectacle seen from the sea, it is interesting less in itself than as a point of departure for those beauties and attractions which surround it. These are listed and routed and dated and explained in the guide-books.

I thought I had seen most of them, except the blue grotto at Capri, which I had dodged without dodging to enter, and yet an entire day remained before taking the road to Calabria. What to do?

The hospitable Gambrinus gave me its best to dine on and its best—or at least my favorite—seat at the end of the oval room, in the window recess where, with the window open, one is literally on the vivacious

Via Chiaia, so narrow that here one may between bites seem able to shake hands with friends on both sides the street.

Every one in Naples passes the Gambrinus. Through the Via Chiaia come the hill people and the dwellers by the sea toward Posilipo. On the opposite side they come, out of the Rione Santa Lucia and from the water-front hotels, across the vast open Piazza of the Plebiscito with the curved colonnade of the Pantheon-like San Francesco at one end and at the other the long façade of the once royal palace. Those who house themselves in the flat city between the harbor and the railway station, and off toward Portici and Pompeii, come head on across the vortex of the smaller Piazza San Ferdinando between the weathered portico of the San Carlo opera-house and the unfortunately unweathered newness of the Galleria Umberto Primo. To the left they swarm down the Via Roma, longest, straightest, noisiest street in Naples, its main commercial artery.

It was an idle evening, as any evening in Naples is apt to be for a stranger if the San Carlo is, as the Italians say, *riposo* (at rest). The diners had all drifted out save for a few self-centered mates in shadowy alcoves. Chiaia had taken on the quiet it succumbs to soon after ten o'clock. Doubtless on the Via Partenope, which is bounded on one side by the bay and on the other by an unbroken line of hotels,

there were serenaders afield with guitars and fiddles, singing of Funicula and Santa Lucia or declaiming hackneyed operatic snatches. But that is tourist Naples.

Here in the Gambrinus the day was gone. The doubtful exhilaration of emptying crystal thimbles of liqueur and of heaping cigarette ashes had begun to pall, when the idle to-morrow was suddenly given an unexpected purpose. An olive-skinned urchin appeared at the window and thrust in an evening paper. I had not the fifth of a lira and he said he "had no change," a fiction which is an overworked bit of native sculduggery. I put the nickel coin in his dirty little palm and waved him off grandly. It saved me the futile expectation of his return with change for he never would have come back. It is fair to the handsome little beggar to say that he bared his head and gave me "a thousand thanks."

One can learn a lot of any language out of its newspapers. It is largely the terminations of words and the irregular verbs which change. The news formula of society, weddings, births, deaths, politics and other crimes, are much the same in every language. So, willing to make a virtue of the situation, I stifled my yawns with what promised no more than a language lesson, and cheerfully began with an obituary.

He had been a baritone and so, in this city of song,





*Photo by Brogi*

### The Island of Nisida

On this little island, in the Bay of Naples, Marcus Brutus had his country seat



PLAZZA VENEZIA, NAPLES

### The Street in Which Caruso Was Born

The Caruso home was in the house on the left of the church, and the future tenor was born in the room behind the balcony

one of Naples’ leading citizens. He had studied singing at the same time as “*il gran’ Caruso*” with Padre Bronzetti, and with the great Caruso he had sung in the choir of Santi Severino e Sosio. (One may be pardoned if one here ruminates parenthetically on what a choir that must have been.) After another five lines, and an interval of considerably more years, their names again appeared together in the Teatro Bellini in the season of Caruso’s operatic début. It was noted that the humble baritone and the eminent tenor met again at the Neapolitan cathedral of song, the Teatro San Carlo, just across the piazza, when Caruso made his important début there to the hisses of his fellow citizens. The necrology left Caruso at this point and went on its separate way to the inevitable.

On another page Caruso’s name flashed out of the type, in a paragraph which indicated the city’s intention to place a large bronze tablet on the house where he was born and at the same time give the famous tenor’s name to the Via San Giovannello in which the house stands. Things frequently do go by threes. In another column I came on Caruso again, this time in the Campo Santo where on the following day they would take his humble friend the baritone.

The face of Caruso was for some years after his death one of the sights of Naples. A process of embalming discovered by a Neapolitan kept the body singularly lifelike in appearance. It was dressed im-



maculately in evening clothes and so was exposed in a crystal casket in its own granite mausoleum. The paper said that representatives of a moving-picture concern had some days before been found focusing their apparatus there; but they had been put out and the tomb had been locked, and it would be reopened only when "a marble slab weighing three thousand pounds had been put in place to protect their beloved Caruso from peering eyes."

These items recalled a Naples not often remembered, the Naples of Caruso, a Naples which it seems is taking on a legend. Why not hunt it out? Much might be done in a day. Good night, Gambrinus. The way home seemed shorter than usual. Purpose had put a spring in my heel.

Being a baby is a sufficiently humble beginning, but Caruso was the eighteenth baby to arrive in his family, so, presumably, only the eighteenth of a novelty. He was born in a remote and humble quarter, so populous that it would seem as if families of eighteen there wouldn't even cause the lifting of an eyebrow.

The way thither led up the roaring Via Roma, a commonplace commercial thoroughfare, where interest is furnished only by the occasional vistas up the narrow streets leading off on the left, often by steps, up the hillside toward that summit where stands the commanding Castel Sant' Elmo. Its northern ter-

mination is obstructed by the Museo Nazionale, whose red walls house one of the finest collections of antiquities and objects of art in the world. Its treasures are available to all visitors save one tiny room devoted to particular Pompeian remains. This a discreet attendant unlocks for gentlemen unaccompanied by ladies. The exhibition is unique, and the custodian of the key must be the envy of his confrères, for his tips represent the boastful satisfaction of the sportive male.

The left turn out of the Via Roma ascends to the royal palace called Capodimonte, whose name sufficiently describes its lofty situation. Our road is to the right, the broad Via Foria, whose termination, after another dusty mile and a half, is just at the end of the little street destined to be named for Caruso.

It is called the Via San Giovannello agli Otto Calli. At sight of this name I permitted myself a hearty laugh, the reason for which was not obvious to my Italian companion. When I explained he asked what it meant in English, in a tone which seemed rather to ask what I thought it meant, and I hastened to cheer him with my translation:

“Street of Saint Johnny of the Eight Corns!”

Having come the three miles thither on foot the name seemed apposite; one could waive a mistaken preposition as of minor moment. But he remained unmoved.

"Possibly," he said, but, like the diplomat's "perhaps," his "possibly" meant "not."

"Had it occurred to you," he continued, "that *calli* might mean paths or lanes? Otto Calli is in fact a suburb's name. It attaches to San Giovannello as a locality finder rather than as a personal description."

Chastened by this language lesson, I made a diversion on the appearance of things. And I had had my laugh.

Poverty is scrawled in capital letters all over this by-street. The houses are low and faded and scarred, and, so far as their inhabitants were concerned, were turned inside out. It presented a lively medley of people and animals, principally donkeys, geese and children, who fraternized all over the place, except when eight or a dozen youngsters, of from eight to a dozen years each, the larger ones carrying yearling babies, drew apart from the animals and, secluding themselves in a tight eager circle, crouching on their knees or heels, pitched copper soldi (each soldo the twentieth part of a nickel lira). When only two youngsters met they threw fingers at each other and the loser paid over his copper penalties. Gambling is the diversion of youngsters in Naples; the instinct often wears itself out by maturity. The sordidness of this bit of slum was a little emphasized by the appearance of the crisp white bonnets of two nuns who picked their way through bedlam.

Streets are poorly marked and the houses are carelessly numbered in this quarter, and even after finding the street we were in despair of finding Caruso's birthplace for the man with the tablet had not yet arrived to make it a "public monument," and the dialect spoken here defied even the Roman with me. But a kind chance, and his own ingenuous curiosity, drew Gennaro di Napoli to the door of his barber shop and into conversation; and he was able to indicate the house, just over the way.

It is a two-story building with a graceful arch into the damp, dark and neglected open well which holds the stairway. On one side of the arch is a coffee bar, on the other a black pocket of a charcoal shop, with rush brooms festooned across the lintel. Ivy was making a brave effort to mask the tile water-pipes, and the cornices of the three windows were green with chance grass. The window at the right has an iron balcony, and it fastened attention on itself for in the room behind it, in the year 1873, the golden voice of Caruso was heard for the first time. No doubt he sang for his dinner. Just next door is the little Church of Little St. John, and here little Enrico was christened.

The Carusos were an itinerant clan. After six years in the "Eight Corns" neighborhood (Rione Otto Calli) young Caruso followed his family in their move to another short street with an even longer



name, Strada San Cosmo fuori di Porta Nolana. In Naples it seems the shorter the street the longer the name.

The distance is only a mile if you know the direct way, which we did not, and take the Corso Garibaldi to the fifth street beyond the great railway station. The towered gateway "outside" of which St. Cosmo Street begins marks the medieval limits of the north-east corner of Naples. But it is now far within an already decayed spread of city. St. Cosmo Street was commonplace and empty, as we passed that way, and instead of finding "No. 54," where little Caruso is supposed to have lived, we found a tiled plaque, seven feet square, bearing a canopied statue of the Madonna and displaying, inside a Wall of Troy, a purgatorial picture of flames and anguish. Underneath these a legend recited:

"O you who pass by this place think of the spasms of fire,  
Think and implore of the Lord God peace and relief  
from such fires.  
*Deh!* For us poor who are here pray Mary, pray  
*Gesu!* Requiem!"

The Carusos and their eighteen children, or as many of them as survived to make up the family procession into this street, did not remain here long, for Enrico's youth and young manhood, until he began his professional career, was lived in the Strettola

Sant' Anna alle Paludi. We asked of a woman under a vast head-load where that *strettola*, "narrow little street," might be, and she gave her reply in a quaint bit of Neapolitan dialect:

"*Direi na bucia* (I should lie if I told you)," which is local idiom for "I don't know."

Sant' Anna alle Paludi means Saint Ann of the Fens: manifestly it was to be found farther east in the lowland toward Vesuvius. This was so far true that, except for a tricky twist, it was found to be a kind of continuation of the Street of St. Cosmo, in a railroad warehouse neighborhood, but it was an advance over the squalor of "Eight Corns."

Out of this street *Carusiello* (little Caruso), went to a neighborhood school and soon farther off through the Nolana Gate, and across Straight-as-a-String-Street (Via Rettifilo), to Maddalena Street behind the Capuano Castle, where he attended a night class for boys training to sing in church choirs. He was only ten years old when he went to work in a cotton-oil and cream-of-tartar warehouse and added to his earnings there by what he received for singing in church.

It was a great day for him when he attained the choir of the great church of Santi Severino e Sossio, remembered for its ceiling frescoed by Corenzio, its beautifully carved choir stalls, and that lovely *Tomb of a Child* near the entrance to the sacristy. Here he

acted in his first tragedy, and it was the tragedy of a singer. He sang the May music here one Month of the Madonna and returned home to find that while he was singing his mother had died.

His voice at this time was contralto, but it distinguished any choir of which he was a member, and made it in demand not only in Naples but in towns roundabout as far as Caserta, Pozzuoli and Amalfi. In his late teens his voice changed to a thin tenor, but in those days Caruso was thin, too. He took evening engagements in and out of town to sing in cafés and became a fixture as a singer at the Risorgimento Baths on the Via Caracciolo, that bayside drive which curves from the Via Partenope west past the public gardens and the aquarium, and south to the hills of Posilipo.

His career continued to zigzag over his city but in such a way that the crooked little streets, burrowing beneath the high Neapolitan houses, seemed designed to make every place accessible. It was while attending the choir school that he sang his first operatic rôle in an amateur performance, given curiously in a church, but his professional début was made years after, in 1894, with a company at the little Teatro Nuovo which may be found in the Vico del Teatro Nuovo, a short way up the Via Roma. Though his "season" here was exactly two performances, and during the eight succeeding months he sang only a

few evenings in the little neighboring city of Caserta, he seems to have felt himself set up as an artist. He no longer engaged himself with cotton-oil and cream of tartar, but spent his time, which was largely leisure, in the grand manner of a man-about-town, playing cards in a café. But he took up his position near enough to his home to be readily reached if fortune, in the person of an impresario, called on him, at a café which rejoiced in the name of Caffè della Napoli all' Ferrovia (Café of Beautiful Naples by the Railway).

Fortune did find him just here, one day the following June. He threw down his cards and substituted for a sick tenor at the Teatro Bellini, which is only a stone's throw from the National Museum, provided, of course, that you could throw a stone over the Istituto di Belle Arti and the Galleria Principe di Napoli. He sang Gounod's *Faust* and as a result was engaged for the summer season in Cairo. When he reached Naples in the fall it must have been in the wake of some reports of him floating up from Egypt, for he found, when he reappeared at the Bellini in October, that he was attracting attention.

It was not exactly the attention of the press or the public but an attention possible only in an Italian city. When he walked out on the stage and the cue came for his first aria, he advanced to the footlights,



and beheld across them, strung along the entire front row, all the best-known Neapolitan tenors! They obviously had not come to acclaim a new rival. Next day musical circles buzzed of his "bust." This second "season" in his home city was again for two performances only.

Just when the future was darkest, and he was seldom farther from his home in the Street of St. Ann of the Fens than the Café of Beautiful Naples by the Railway, he very nearly achieved his highest hope of singing on the sacred stage of the San Carlo. That is to say, he came as near as the Teatro Mercadante, with only the lofty seaside Castel Nuovo (whose gate will be remembered as the loveliest architectural object in Naples) between. Though he sang here fifty-one times in four months, he was still so long a way from the San Carlo, that it took him five years to reach that stage, not a quarter of a mile away; and to reach it, he sang his way through the principal cities of Italy from Palermo on the other side of Scylla and Charybdis to Trieste on the farther shore of the Adriatic, and as far north and east as St. Petersburg and Moscow and as far south and west as Buenos Aires.

When he returned to Naples in the autumn of 1901, he was really something of a figure. With cash and prestige he was seen less frequently in the haunts about the railway station. He remained "down-

town" and exhibited himself at the tables in the cafés of the Galleria Umberto Primo just over the way from the San Carlo. The opera presented on December thirtieth, the occasion of his first appearance there, was *L'Elisir d'Amore*.

He neglected, or refused, to pay preliminary deferences to a powerful, self-constituted cabal which sought to dictate the reception of artists making their début at San Carlo. When he advanced to sing his first aria, friends in the house offered him some encouraging applause. But above it rose the hisses of the dictators. Caruso overcame his surprise and his chagrin, gathered himself together and sang. He sang that night through to the end of the opera and he finished his brief engagement. But the hisses had struck home, and his mind was made up.

Caruso, solely on his own initiative, probably did nothing else so definite and decisive in all his life, or anything else that exacted such a sacrifice of his hopes and aspirations, as he did in making the resolution he made that night, his first night on the stage of the San Carlo, the night that he had anticipated as the culmination of a dream. His golden voice had been given to him. His great career was the slow process of many forces without as well as within. But with those hisses in his ears and in his heart his own nature rose and stood definitely by a decision of his own and only making. He loved Naples more

than any place else in the world. He wanted to sing to the acclaim of his own city more than anything else he could imagine. He could have turned the tide by carrying on. But thereafter the city did not exist for the singer.

"I will never again come to Naples to sing," he said, "it will only be to eat a plate of spaghetti." And he never did sing in Naples again.

Indeed, afterward he rarely came to the city he loved and whose love he had wanted. Even his last visit was something of an accident. Having taken ill in New York one spring just twenty years later, he came to recuperate on the sunny cliffs of Sorrento. But a phase of his illness developed which required him to start for Rome for an operation. He crossed the bay to Naples, but he could go no farther.

In spite of him, the fates were with Naples, and she claimed him. He died there a few days after his arrival, and Naples buried him like a hero in a specially erected chapel in the cemetery, just over the hill from the fens from which his own boyhood street of Sant' Anna alle Paludi took its name.

Naples has long since forgotten that she ever hissed Caruso. She seems even to have forgotten that he thereafter refused to sing for her. She remembers only that he was Neapolitan, that he carried the tradition of Italian *bel canto* over the civilized earth, that at the end he came home. And, as was the custom in

the days of the Roman Empire, the city names him among the demigods of her pantheon.

Has she put the memorial plaque on the house of his birth? And the Street of Saint Johnny, has she actually renamed it Caruso Street?

“I should lie if I told you.”



## CHAPTER II

### WHERE ITALY WAS GREECE

THE TEMPLES OF PAESTUM—THE FOOT IN THE ITALIAN BOOT—THE CAPE OF ÆNEAS' HELMSMAN—COMING INTO CALABRIA—PAOLA OF SAN FRANCESCO—WHERE VENUS BECOMES SAINT VENERE—SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS—MAGNA GRÆCIA—ALONG THE IONIAN SHORE—CATANZARO IN THE SKY—THE SECOND COMING OF CROTON—HOME OF THE SYBARITES—THE MYSTERY OF ALARIC'S GRAVE

NEARLY every non-Italian who comes to Naples leaves it by the northern road to Rome. A few such take the train southward, but it is the night train, and they see little even from the car window until at Reggio their train is put aboard the ferry for Sicily across the narrow Strait of Messina. Italy south of the immediate neighborhood of Naples is the least frequented large section of the peninsula. Even the northern Italians scorn it.

The spell of the unknown, however, is universally acknowledged. It was, I believe, Tacitus who wrote: "It's the unknown for the magnificent." At any rate

southern Italy offered whatever tonic there is in going where few others go, where little is charted for you and nothing is promised by the tourist bureaus, and where there is an opportunity for some element of novelty.

Southern Italy is the foot of the Italian boot. It is practically all that portion of the peninsula which lies south and east of a line drawn from Naples, through Benevento and Foggia, to the Gulf of Manfredonia on the Adriatic. Its west coast on the Tyrrhenian Sea is the "instep," its east coast on the Ionian Sea is the "sole," its north coast on the Adriatic Sea is the "heel." The instep is made aristocratically high by the Apennines tapering off through Calabria to the tip of the toe at Reggio. The heel is a long, low, rolling plain, a province which the Italians call *Le Puglie*, of which the English equivalent, borrowed from the Latin, is *Apulia*.

Somewhere in the remote and obscure past there first appeared here the name *Italia* which has since traveled the length of the whole peninsular boot.

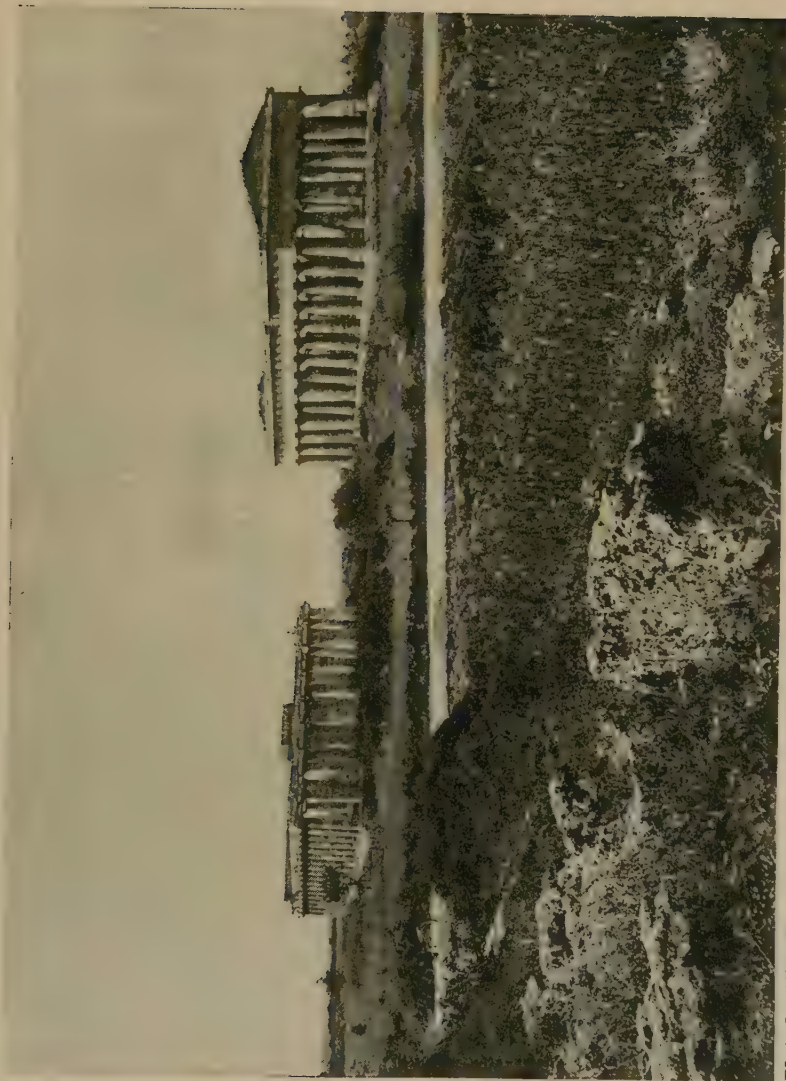
These shores, from the Bay of Naples around down to the toe, were colonized from the cities which ranged from the Strait of Messina to the heel. This stretch of shore along the sole was called *Magna Græcia*, and it was settled by traders from Greece in a past so remote that it eludes any fixed date. Curiously it was only the shores which were so settled,

for the mountainous interior was inhabited by tribes who never succumbed, at least to the Greeks.

Once the cities and the culture of Magna Græcia and its colonies rivaled those of Greece itself. This was a glory of the distant days when a literal-minded person might imagine Homer to have been a boy playing about in some one of the numerous cities which have since set up as his birthplace. When Cicero wrote nearly seven centuries later, the deterioration amounted practically to annihilation. But the memory of Magna Græcia still clings to the foot of Italy, and there are some remains. The last two thousand years have added other heroic impressions.

Every one who has been to Naples with a spare day or two has of course taken the "Amalfi Drive." There is on the Sorrento peninsula along the coast as far as Salerno as much congested natural beauty, perhaps, as in any other equal area on earth. It is almost with relief that one presses south beyond Salerno for forty miles across the marshy plains to Paestum. And this interlude of flat, featureless landscape is the best possible preparation for those desolate spectral remains of Grecian greatness that stand roofless and denuded of all ornamentation in the vast walled area which was once a powerful city.

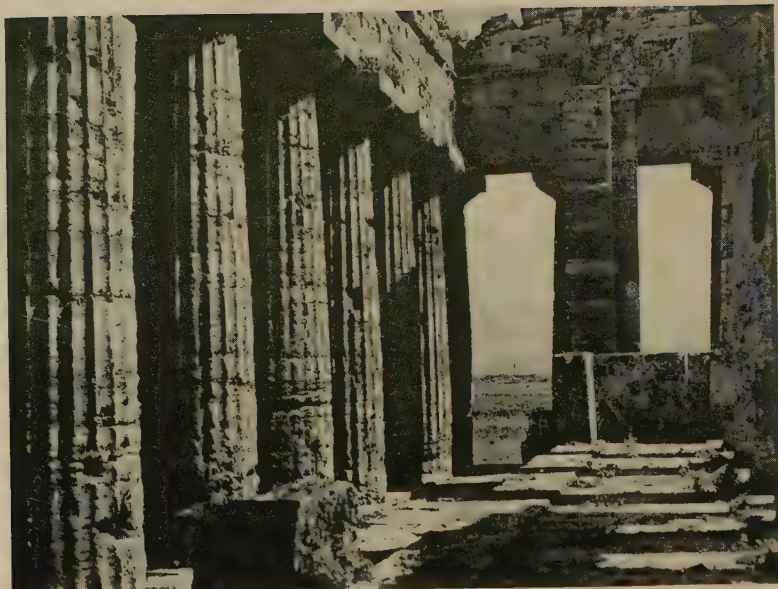
The city of Poseidonia (city of Neptune) was founded about the year 600 B. C. by Greek colonists from Sybaris on the coast of the foot of Italy. After



*Photo by Alinari*

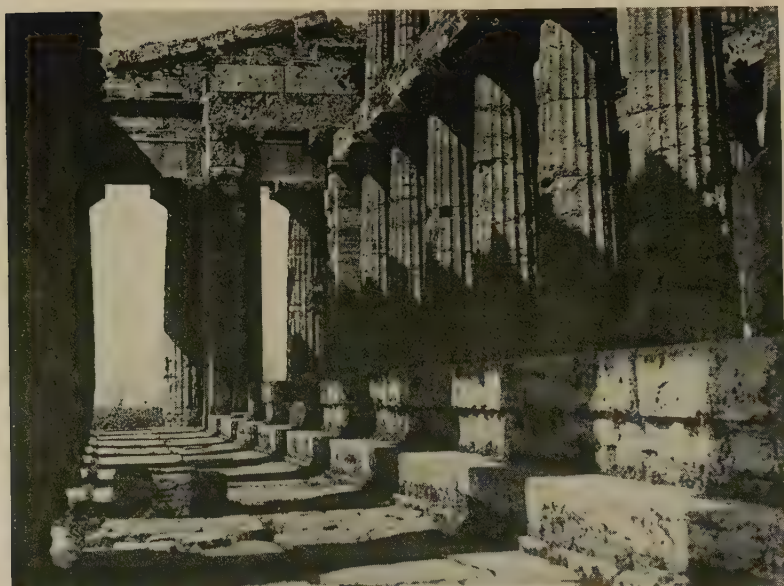
Paestum  
The Basilica and the Temple of Poseidon





Paestum

Detail of the Temple of Neptune looking toward the Mountains



*Photos by Kurt Juen*

Paestum

Detail of the Temple of Poseidon looking toward the Mediterranean

about three centuries, it was conquered by the Romans, who Latinized the name to Paestum. Later it was conquered by the mosquito. The native insects are said not to have carried the malarial germs until Hannibal's soldiers brought malaria from Africa and Spain when they descended through the Alps upon the Italian peninsula. When these mosquitoes bit the Carthaginians and thereafter inoculated the Romans, there was a slow infiltration of poison into the blood of the people. This is given as one of the many internal causes for the decay of Roman greatness. Great areas of Italy became malarial; Paestum notoriously so. When, in the ninth century, the Saracens despoiled the coast, the remaining inhabitants fled inland and established themselves on the more salubrious mountainsides. The Saracens thus finished Paestum as a living city. Two centuries later Robert Guiscard began denuding the public buildings of their works of art, and during the succeeding centuries they were the favorite source of pillage for the builders of Christian churches in the neighborhood and as far as Salerno and Amalfi.

Of all the great city of Paestum only three buildings survive: the little temple of Ceres, an exquisite fragment; the temple of Neptune, largest and best preserved; and the Basilica, reputed to be the oldest of the three. Even in their despoiled state, they are by some experts rated the finest monuments of Greek

architecture outside of Athens. But, when one sees the temple of Segesta on its lonely thousand-foot hill, and the temple of Concord on Girgenti's billowing hillside above the African sea, it is not easy to regard the Sicilian survivals as less impressive witnesses of the grandeur that was Greece.

Here at Paestum the effect was indeed at first disappointing. One resented any life whatever in the presence of these ghosts of a dead past. And there was life all about. Farmers' houses of tufa, with pink tile roofs, were sprinkled all over the scarcely perceptible slope to the sea. White oxen plowed the soil to the very base of each of the three temples. Some tourists trailed about, and picnicked in the shadows of the temples, when a herd of dogs, roused from their sun baths, assembled to beg the leavings and looked as if they needed them. Cats, too, crept about through the forest of columns, but with a magnificent independence, for they found their own forage elsewhere among the rich bird and bug life roundabout.

Even in the midst of distracting commonplaces, however, the splendid ruins gradually worked their spell—their enormous simplicity, their delicacy and grace of detail, the golden tone of their weathered travertin seen in the sunshine, the patterns made by light and shadows cutting obliquely across the lateral colonnades, the vista framed by columns and cornice

looking east to the purple mountains and the vista looking through similar frames down the reedy lea to the sea were entrancing.

But one longed to have the plowmen and tourists and attendants and oxen and dogs and cats all go, even the brilliant sun, that one might be with these witnesses of twenty-five centuries of shifting civilizations in the solitude and silence which have been so long their setting, bathed in the gray of twilight, or dawn, or a silvering moonlight which so much better becomes the venerableness of their decayed splendor.

Beyond Paestum, the mountains come directly to the sea, and the entire shore-line of the foot of Italy from here around the toe and up the sole to Sibari, for four hundred and seventy-five miles, does not provide a natural margin wider than a few feet for the railway which often runs along an excavated shelf or tunnels through the rocky buttresses which seem to hold the mountains from sliding into the sea. I accept the figures of another who counted and says there are eighty tunnels on the two hundred and fifty miles of the instep alone, from Paestum to Reggio. And' what an improvement it will be when, as on the northern half of the Italian coast, by the introduction of electricity, hydro-generated from the mountain streams, coal and gas and soot and cinders are banished also from these now suffocating tunnels! But as the sterile mountains keep the main interests



along the sea, and the roads are poor, there is no better way to see this country than from a railway-carriage window, with an occasional descent where the curiosity is particularly whetted.

Economically, it is Italy at its poorest; scenically, it is rich in the unfailing loveliness of those lines where sea and mountains meet; artistically it has only a few detached fragments; but historically it is a great page on which more than twenty-five centuries have left their story, and here we meet figures from all the ages even from the legendary days of the *Æneid*.

I like the Italian word for history. To them it is *storia*, and so they have but one word for history and for story, so history and story blend and the adventures and achievements of the great characters become "a tale to be told."

As the temples disappear behind, Mount Stella rises ahead, and the train burrows around and under it, coming again to the waterside not far from the scant remains of the once famous city of Velia or Elea. It was built by the Phocæans about 536 B. C. after they had wandered over this western sea as far north as Alalia (Corsica) and Massilia (Marseilles) unwelcomed and unwanted. The Eleatic philosophers—Zenophanes, father of pantheism; Parmenides and Zeno, champions of the "unchanging God"—gave the Eleatic school a luster which remains ages after its temporal home has crumbled into the sea.

Ahead, down an arc of surf silvering the shore, rose the noble austere headland which is the cape named for Palinurus, the helmsman of Æneas, who, cast into the sea by a tempest, was here swept ashore and buried. The heroic pilot was honored with a cenotaph and a sacred grove along this shore, and the simple people hereabout will (for a fee) lead you to ruins on the high cap of the cape and for good measure tell you these are the remains of the tomb of Palinurus. Whatever the truth may be as to that, the priestess, in the sixth book of the *Æneid*, after the pilot's recital, uttered a prophecy which has remained true so far, when she declared that the scene of his shipwreck should for ever keep his name.

Monte Bulgheria next interposed its four thousand feet of altitude between us and the sea. Three more tunnels and much winding of the railway through Alpine scenery which must have made the engineers writhe when they came to conquer it. Then suddenly the lovely Bay of Policastro. Just above the instep of Italy there are three bays which rival one another in natural beauty. The two others are the Bay of Naples and the Bay of Salerno. Policastro is comparatively unpopulated. The scenery is unadorned by cities and villas. Its embellishments are the olive groves seemingly as ancient as those across the sea in Majorca. But viewed apart it would seem that the arc of Policastro, entirely cupped by rugged

mountains far higher here than about Naples and Salerno, has nevertheless a beauty of its own that challenges the other bays to the north. Its narrative of beauty, written in Nature's own characters, is doubly punctuated at its end by the little islands of Dino, with watered grottoes whose azure rivals that of Capri.

In the stretch of coast following, the towns hang like nests of masonry high up on the mountainsides. The broken silhouettes of ruined cities and castles rise out of the rocks, and sometimes the rocks lift them sheer out of the sea, or hold up merely the stumps of stone watch-towers. Where the waters of the Lao have washed a delta there were some broken arches of an aqueduct, a solitary reminder of the ubiquitous Roman engineers. High above lofty Fuscaldo there was a convent literally in the clouds. At the mouths of the torrents were women sorting the small stones by hand and carrying them by basket-loads on their heads and shoulders to the cars on the sidings.

At this point my vis-à-vis in the compartment, who heretofore had made no other demonstration than one of affection for his wife, whose hand he held every mile of the way, now ventured that we had reached the coast of Calabria, his Calabria, yes and her Calabria, too. And didn't I think it very fine? I lied as best I could about a distinction I hadn't per-

ceived and was rewarded by their exchange of gratified smiles, and by what he told me of the town of Paola, or rather of San Francesco di Paola, whose monastery they pointed out on its eyry above all else but the highest summits.

This holy man, he said, was of the fifteenth century, and Calabria has produced no one so famous since. When a lad he went with his parents on a pilgrimage to Assisi. He was so impressed by his spiritual experience at the shrine of his namesake, who founded the Minor Friars, that he determined to excel him in humility, to outdo him in pious abnegation, and so established an order of Minimites or Humblest Friars, which was an exaggeration of the strict self-denial of the mere Minors of Assisi. The fame of Francesco di Paola spread all over the Catholic world, but its most notable effect on his own career was the call he received from the French King Louis XI. By the Pope's command Francesco, or Francis, sailed to France, where he was met by the Dauphin at Amboise and conducted to the royal seat at Plessis. There King Louis met the monk on his knees, lodged him in his own palace, and later died in his arms. The Dauphin, thereupon become Charles VIII, held Francis in even higher honor than had his father. He built him several convents, the last on the Pincian Hill in Rome, where it survives at the head of the Spanish steps above the Piazza di Spagna.



Francis remained in France, where he died in his ninety-first year, and was buried at Plessis.

The Calabrian recited all this with touching sympathy. Then his eyes snapped and his pleasant voice went guttural as he added: "His body did not change even in death. It had remained uncorrupted for half a century, when the Huguenots despoiled his tomb, dragged the saint's body through the streets, and burned it on a pyre fed with the crosspieces of a great crucifix."

Having introduced themselves these Calabrians furnished a running narrative of all the points to Reggio. I forgot it all except that at lonely Pizzo, of all places, Joachim Murat, having been booted off his throne at Naples, landed, to begin a drive to regain the city on the Bay. Instead of friends whom he expected to meet at Pizzo, he found a firing squad. And the remains of this twig of the imperial Napoleonic tree were carried no farther than the local parish church where they remain under a plain slab.

As we paused at Santa Venera, the port of lofty Monteleone, I warmed to their news that in the high valley just beyond the first ridge were the ruins of the first monastery established, in 1094, by Saint Bruno, whose austere cloistered monks contributed so much good cheer to the world at large. They were called Carthusians, and they invented and gave their hallowed name to the hallowed warming liqueur sipped,

wherever opportunity offers, under its French name, *chartreuse*. Wherefore, in passing, a silent toast was offered to good Saint Bruno and his brew.

They had nothing, however, to say of Santa Venera. The name, nevertheless, carried a curious interest. It is often pointed out that the builders of the Christian church, on the ruins of Greek and Roman pantheism, substituted a Christian saint for every pagan god. The antidote for carnal Venus, queen of the pagan pantheon, is in general "the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven." At Santa Venera, however, the shift was made with less change, for here seductive Venus appears canonized in her own name!

As we rounded Cape Vaticano there stood revealed that panoramic assembly which no traveler in this direction can help anticipating above all else. Gray in sea-mist stood the shadowy Lipari Islands; nearest, and so appearing higher than highest Selina, was smoking Stromboli. Beyond the dark masses of the Aspromonte Mountains on the tip of the toe of the entire Italian peninsula was the opalescent shadow which was Sicily. The darker mass of headland we knew for Scylla, and just before the lighter mass which faces it were the whirling waters of Charybdis.

The terrors of Scylla and Charybdis are to-day a tradition. It is not so much the whirling of angry

waters as the tremor of the angry earth which terrorizes the people on this coast. Everywhere here is the wreckage of ages of earthquakes; everywhere a newness in the low wooden houses which tells of the renewed defiance of the recurrent disasters.

If nature is cruel here it is kind, too, for from Palmi onward the landscape is luxurious with orchards of olives and chestnuts and oranges and lemons. The city of Reggio at the end, with no physical vestige of its almost indefinite antiquity, is to-day an anti-climax, interesting chiefly as a platform from which at once, on the right and left, may be seen the superb spectacle of the smoking cones of Stromboli and Ætna.

Beyond, we turned the corner to go north again, but this time the sea was east instead of west of us. We were on that stretch, from Reggio at the toe to Taranto at the heel, which is the sole of the figurative Italian boot. Historically it is Magna Græcia, a Greek outpost that was as great as Greece itself. The waters are the waters of that part of the Mediterranean which is called the Ionian Sea. The ruins are the ruins of a Greek civilization. The increased height of the mountains, here more sterile and abrupt, gives the very shore-line a resemblance to Greece. Even the fishermen and farmers in many places on this coast speak an Italian so strongly influenced by Greek that it is not understood by natives from other parts of Italy.

Of all Italian shores, this is the one least known to the foreigner. This was reflected at once in the character of the passengers on the train. Down from Naples the crowd was somewhat cosmopolitan. All nationalities mingle on that road to Sicily. But, just across this peninsula where Italy is narrowest, the travelers were all Italians, with a slight sprinkling of Greeks; of course, save one. Wondering who my fellow travelers here might be, I made friends with an official, and he pointed out salesmen and politicians, a Sicilian sea-captain on his way to Bari to meet his ship, a priest moving to a new parish, several naval officers booked for the Italian naval base at Taranto, three Greek traders with tickets for Corfu, two bearded Sicilian-Greek priests, of Piana dei Greci beyond Palermo, accompanying a bearded Greek bishop back to Patras, and the local off-and-on traffic between the scattered towns.

There were, however, no women aboard. There were no women even at the stations. The only women I remember to have seen along this Ionian coast were working before the doors of their cottages, which sometimes resembled straw igloos, or in the fields turning the rocky soil with heavy primitive tools. Their skirts were as ample as a cavalier's cloak and afield they wore them turned back and knotted behind. Their flat white coifs were sharp notes in the dull background. It is said that on feast-days their costumes are more colorful.



The trains here by day stop at every station. So it was not quite surprising to find that six hours after leaving Reggio we had come only one hundred and twenty miles. But, agreeably, our journey broke just as the mountainous wall broke, and, across the mouth of the Corace, we saw, inland on its rock, the city of Catanzaro, and went in.

Catanzaro is the largest city below a line drawn from Salerno to Taranto. Yet it has fewer than thirty thousand inhabitants. Silk and velvet factories within, and olive groves without, help to make it thrive, but mainly it is a market and an exchange for the Calabrians south of the Sila Mountains. Its long, high, main street and its dark buildings remind one of Siena. But if it has none of the architectural glories of that northern city, neither has Siena an outlook comparable to Catanzaro's.

The city stands on a lofty promontory jutting out from the mountains above the flat plain, somewhat as Valetta juts out into the sea across at Malta, and like the Maltese city it is wind-driven and clean. If Catanzaro has slums, it conceals them. Green and blooming public gardens and white balustraded streets almost encircle the city and provide sky balconies from which one looks off, over the patterned landscapes down below, to the snow-capped Sila group to the north, south to the forest-clad Aspromonte, and eastward to the blue Ionian and its littoral.

If the center of the city suggests Siena, on this outlook one remembers Perugia's terrace above the Tiber; but Catanzaro's terrace is by nearly two hundred feet the higher, and moreover, with so much else to charm, Perugia hasn't the sea.

Where the railway first crosses the foot above the "toe," in other words from Catanzaro to Sant' Eufemia, the Italian peninsula is at its narrowest. I went up to Tiriolo, at its 2,263 feet the loftiest town in Calabria, and climbed to the castle ruins on the heights behind, and there looked down from a single spot upon the waters of the two seas, the Tyrrhenian to the west and the Ionian to the east.

Not fifty miles farther up this coast, just beyond the Capo Colonne—on whose tip survives but a single massive column of the Temple of Hera, older even than the temples of Paestum, the oldest Greek monument in Italy, and once the pride of the entire Greek world—nests the commonplace little city of Cotrone by its harbor. Its name and site are survivals of Greek Croton, which faded twenty-five centuries ago after a prosperity so great that it was able to send a victorious army of one hundred thousand men against the superior numbers of the neighboring and rival city of Sybaris. Its chief, or at least its exclusive glory, however, was not military, for all the early Mediterranean world sent students to its school of medicine. Here, too, Pythagoras established his

school of philosophy and taught his doctrines of numbers and of metempsychosis, and his severe practises of pagan asceticism. Prizes at Olympia and Delphi were captured by the athletes of Croton, the most famous of whom was that Milo of Croton who

“Could rend an oak  
And peg thee in his knotty entrails.”

Defeat, decay, tempests and earthquakes eventually overwhelmed Croton and after many centuries when Don Pedro of Toledo came this way he reassembled some of the remains in the towered and moated citadel which crowns the modern town. The day I saw it the moat was white with the linen and suds of the women doing washing there, the earlier comers remaining to gossip while their handmaidens, the sun and the breeze, finished their job for them.

The men of Cotrone are often tall and swarthy fellows, but not taller than their talk. They boast of what the newly arrived hydroelectricity from the Sila and the newly made port are to do for their city in terms that suggest the optimism of “boom” days in the American West. It is true there are new warehouses and new factories and new buildings of some sorts, and the population, they say, has increased fifty per cent. in the last five years; but this is nothing in comparison with their hopes and boasts. The spokes-

men of the present city of some twelve thousand souls affect a tone of marvelous confidence in telling that there will be a hundred thousand there in another ten years. They at least have the stenciled phrases of confident prophecy, and many a boom has started on the same capital. Heracles once prophesied that a mighty city would rise above the tomb of Croton. It did. And it disappeared. The modern Heracleans of Cotrone believe, it seems, in its "second coming."

Beyond Cotrone the mountains lay back a little from the shore and, across the rolling foreground of asphodel and grain and grazing grass, there are enchanting vistas of white hill towns, some fair against the sky—San Severino, Strongoli, San Nicola, Melissa, Cìrò, Cariatì near enough to give the green and yellow jeweled note of its tiled Duomo across its bastioned walls, Cropalati sweeter to see no doubt than enter, Rossano timidly lifting the five Byzantine domes of its Cathedral up from behind its hills, towered Corigliano far but fair in the sun-cleared air—until the valley of the Crati opens and spreads a flat desolate delta by the sea.

Here, unimaginably, once stood Sybaris, that other Achæan colony which surpassed all the other cities of ancient Magna Græcia. One puts it mildly to suggest that Sybaris was the Paris of the Grecian world. It seems to have emulated the united fame even of Sodom and Gomorrah. In a span of five hun-



dred years it rose to greatness and disappeared, but the tradition of its riches and indulgent living endures and has made the word "sybarite" everywhere synonymous with opulence and corruption.

Just as Catanzaro might have been reached by the line from Sant' Eufemia on the instep so the inland town of Cosenza might have been reached by a sharp railway climb from Paola on that same western shore. There is, too, a motor-bus service across the mountains between Cosenza and Catanzaro. But the road up the valley of the Crati seems the natural way of Cosenza, the mountain-fortified capital of the Bruttii who were never ousted from their high places by the coastal Greeks.

The Crati Valley extends forty-six miles south from Sibari, a village on the site of great Sybaris, at the foot of the Mountain of Sweet Sleep (Serra Dolcedorme, 7,451 feet) to Cosenza under the cluster of mountains called La Sila (6,332 feet). The train covers this distance in two and a half hours, a feeble show of speed, which is only in part explained by twelve stops on the way and a climb of eleven hundred and fifty feet. If the valley is agreeable, the city of Cosenza is an irregular lump of masonry, dark and dull and unimportant. Nevertheless, this ugly duckling, too, had its own epic moment.

It stands at the confluence of the two mountain torrents, the Busento and the Crati, and on the road

which in the second century B. C. one Papilius (there were two of them to choose from, it seems, a consul and a censor) built behind the first protective range of hills paralleling the Italian instep from Capua through Salerno, Lagonegro and Cosenza down to Reggio, and for whom it was named the Via Papilia.

Many an army marched along the Papilia road, but none so famous as the horde of Visigoths which Alaric led. Having captured and sacked Rome, this captain, meditating the conquest of rich Sicily, led his host down the Via Papilia, sacking and despoiling every town along the way as far as Cosentia (Cosenza). While his barbarian legions along the river valleys fretted in their camps, which were bulging with slaves and plunder, he fell ill and there died in 410 A. D. He was given such a warrior's funeral as was never given to another.

The barbarians, by the labor of their captives, turned aside the river Buxentius (Busento) from its course and deep in its rocky bed constructed a sepulcher for their chief. Here they sealed him, with his armor and his war-horses, surrounded with his share of the spoils and trophies which his armies had wrenched from Rome. Then they turned the torrent again into its course. Lest the exact location of Alaric's grave should become known, his ferocious soldiers massacred the slaves who had done their bidding.

Time and the river have kept their secret well. The mystery of the Visigoth captain's grave is kept alive, and given a neighborhood, if not a definite location, by a bridge across the Busento where that river meets the Crati. The bridge here is called the Bridge of Alaric with a pretense that in the bed of the Busento beneath it is the grave of Alaric.

The Crati, untroubled by this problem, however, hurries laughingly on and meets the sea in that broad sweep which is the Gulf of Taranto, named for the city beyond in the angle where the sole of Italy meets its heel. The hills taper and fade northward, and the interest flattens with the landscape to the level of a featureless plain. It is a chosen stretch for forty winks, or forty thousand, to dream of Pythagoras or Alaric, or, perhaps, of Pyrrhus, and his elephants, who here gained his first victory over the Romans, and then to be awakened by a *fachino* clamoring for your luggage at the Taranto station.

## CHAPTER III

### TARANTO OF THE TARANTELLA

THE CITY, THE SPIDER AND THE DANCE—GREAT SEA  
AND LITTLE SEA—DIVERSIONS OF A FISH MARKET—  
FESTOONS OF OYSTERS—AN EVENING AT A PROVINCIAL  
ITALIAN OPERA—CASUAL ASSEMBLY AND UNCON-  
VENTIONAL BEGINNINGS—HUMAN BOUQUETS IN THE  
BOXES—ALL-HIGHEST MAESTRO—THE GLORY THAT IS  
HIS—THE NEXT-HIGHEST PROMPTER REACTING FROM  
HIS HOOD

FROM the moment I realized that Italy's gay mad dance, the tarantella, came from Taranto, that city assumed an interest. The similarity of names is, however, less significant than it seems. Tarantella appears to derive from Taranto. In reality it derives from the spider called the tarantula. Then it is Taranto which derives from the tarantula? Not at all; its origin is in Tarentum, the Roman name for the city. That being so, did the spider take its name from the Roman city, or Tarentum from the tarantula? It seems that the city which the Romans captured from the Greeks was called merely Taras, which gets



farther and farther from the spider and the dance. So the whole question recedes in doubt, and should perhaps not have been opened.

The tarantella and the tarantula were, however, both very real; and both still survive in a limited way. The dance and its music still enliven life in southern Italy, especially in the villages on feast-days, and in the public rooms of hotels entertaining enough tourists for an audience. On such occasions the barbers and waiters and maids tog themselves out in red and green and black velvet, with fluttering ribbons, and, jingling their tambourines, pretend to be *contadini* in native costumes, and so give a leaden imitation of "the merry villagers at play." The tarantula, the spider who doesn't dance, is now seldom in evidence, and it rarely imposes on the population the poisonous intimacy that inspired the tarantella.

The day was, however, in the Middle Ages, when this venomous nibbler was so numerous as to be a scourge. Its bite, or at least the dread of its effects, produced hysteria, convulsions and even madness. The first effects were, however, merely depression and lethargy. The accepted remedy for the person in this condition was wild and vivacious music which stimulated him to an overwhelming desire to dance. Partner after partner was exhausted while the sufferer twirled and leaped to the mad measures for many hours until he collapsed, exhausted and bathed

in perspiration. Through the opening pores the poison was believed to escape, and so, for a time at least, a cure was effected. The mania for dancing the poison out of people became general over whole regions; old and young, men and women succumbed to it. It achieved a name, *tarantism*; and the only accepted cure was the music and dance which was called the tarantella. This music and dance first appeared as a therapeutic; and thus, too, appeared, if not the first doctors of music, at least the first musical doctors.

Taranto has a unique situation, a situation all its own. The old city stands on an island in what, even without it, would be a narrow inlet between the wide gulf and a little bay about twelve miles in circumference. These waters are here referred to as the Mare Grande (the Big Sea) on the south and the Mare Piccolo (the Little Sea) on the north. The gentle, almost imperceptible Mediterranean tide moves in and out of the Little Sea, through two channels about the width of modern city streets, at either end of the old island city; but it is said that nowhere else from Gibraltar to Suez does it move more swiftly than here. Opposite each end of the oblong island peninsulas reach out, each with a bridge to it, and on the peninsulas are situated the modern extensions of the city.

The train arrived on the western peninsula in the

midst of warehouses and markets, and the way to the hotels exposed the plan of the whole city en route. In crossing the Bridge of the Neapolitan Gate, the shipping of the mercantile port at the right obscured a little any distant outlook on the Big Sea. But on the left was the entire panorama of the Little Sea, land-locked nearer in the distance by the low cliffs of disintegrated shells which yielded the purple dye that made the city famous long before Plato came to visit it. Farther away were the plains, rolling back to low hills against a low horizon, except at the immediate right where the fishermen's high houses rose along one side of the Strada Garibaldi of the old city; ranks of war-ships at the naval station lined the first reaches of its southern shore.

For all the freedom of the old city's circumference, festooned, as is also each adjacent peninsula, with quay-streets that give an outlook far across the water, once we left the bridge and plunged into Strada Maggiore (Main Street! Is there another in Italy?), centuries slipped away. So, too, seemingly, did the sun; and the islands appeared a mere accumulation of architectural barnacles left by receding waters, through which narrow, dark, hot passages screwed their ways. Somewhere in this maze is the Cathedral of San Cataldo, less interesting for itself than for its patron, who was an Irishman. Here, too, are two Doric columns and a stylobate, the only standing

remnants of the days of Taras. Overlooking the Big Sea at the eastern channel is the tenth-century castle put here under the reign of Charles V.

Happy is the cabman who drives his foreign fare to the eastern bridge in the shadow of this round towered citadel, while a ship is passing from one sea to the other, for, as he is quick to tell you, at least ours was, "*E ponte girevole* (it is a swinging bridge)"—which parts in the middle and folds back, leaving the entire channel free. He rose to his feet on his high perch to make an adequate gesture and a further speech of presentation which had all the externals of persuasive eloquence, but he wrapped it up in dialect, and so left us ignorant of its content, but impressed.

By all but the most sophisticated Tarantinos this bridge is regarded as the eighth wonder of the world. Its movement always draws a crowd. Post-cards showing it open and shut, by sunlight and moonlight, and from every angle, are the only post-cards of Taranto that have any currency. One should for the cabman's sake politely affect an awe in the presence of his supreme offering, but privately, while waiting for the bridge's pleasure, one will, however, find more interest in the outer aspects of the handsome new city across the canal and in looking up the fine perspectives of one of the main avenues to the great piazza where the public palaces abound.



Once in the new city it was apparent that, in spite of intervening ill fortunes, Taranto again occupies its ancient distinction of being the leading city of Magna Græcia. No other city on the coast of southern Italy, from Naples on the shin of the boot to Bari on the calf, compares with Taranto in size or importance. It has attained to this, now as in the ancient days, by reason of its uniquely protected port, of the productive fields and orchards roundabout it, and not least by its fisheries.

In the midst of many more important common-places, it is the fish market, the fishermen and the fisheries, which present Taranto's most characteristic phase of life. From other ports of Italy the fishing ships put out under gay sails and brave the storms and deep waters for long absences, but here the finny life is so plentiful that the Tarantino fisherman seldom sleeps out of his own bed. The boats that slip under the Bridge of the Neapolitan Gate into the broad waters of the Big Sea rarely go beyond the Capo San Vito or the two protective Coradi Islands, all in sight of the city. Their prey are mullet, tunny, sprats, sardines and anchovies, and odds and ends of strange Mediterranean creatures whose names exist only in the untranslatable local dialect or perhaps equally untranslatable scientific names, which the fishermen take with their *sciabiche*, *tramaglio*, *bertorelli*, *nasse*, *lenze*, *schietto*, *fuso* and *faccione*—a brave

array of words in the local dialect which mean only their various nets and baskets, poles and lines. They are primitive and local like their names, and not notably different from others elsewhere, except the *nasse*. These are trap-baskets, resembling giant wicker candle snuffers, and ample enough for a fisherman to crawl into and hide. It is one of the picturesque sights of the Big Sea to see a procession of fishing boats each poled home by a boy all but buried and invisible among the giant clusters of gray and brown cones.

In the Little Sea the Tarantinos seem to fish from their own door-steps, or, at most, just beyond in the shallow waters of their front yards. Here are the fields of oysters, transplanted from the Big Sea to mature in friendlier waters; oysters that are eaten with the shell half open, coppery to the taste, and so tiny that one eats none or several dozen to a modest portion. Here are the celebrated *cozze nere* (black clams) of Taranto, which grow in clusters, into long garlands, and when you buy them you ask not for numbers but for the length of this clam-rope you wish, and the seller cuts off as few or as many millimeters as you indicate.

The garlands of *cozze nere* decorate the boats that bring them in. The fishmonger who sells them in the street hangs them over his arms or about his neck like the giant *lei* that Hawaiians hang about the necks of

visitors in token of welcome. In the fish market they are draped in festoons about the booths where they are for sale; the single instance, perhaps, wherein live fish are used for decoration.

The market extends from channel to channel along the quay on the Little Sea side of the Old City, and an early morning visit among the crowds there is an experience. The tall houses that line the waterfront are the homes of fishermen, and the tints of the façades seem to suggest that the fish themselves have got into their coloring; in one the dark mottled green of a live lobster, in another the red of a lobster boiled, here the peculiar pink of the shrimp, there the purple and black of the *cozze nere*, or the sickly gray of fish bellies or the silver and yellow of their backs. Across the long low line of market roof train the slender mast tips of the fishing boats moored at the quay, making a pattern like the comb of a wild boar or the profile of a porcupine.

The market was without walls, and, so far as I could see, it was the forum of the town where people came to gossip and argue, and made the purchase of fish an inconsequential incident. Piled on marble slabs or heaped in tilted brown baskets rimmed with fresh green leaves, the sea-creatures were at once esthetic and curious, for there was an endless variety of marine specimens, some that would have added variety to the aquarium at Naples. If the devil-fish

of the transparent colorless mass that suggests the jellyfish would not serve the purpose, at least the white invertebrate entity of the mollusk family protruding on the pink lip of its graceful conical shell would. Strangest of all, because of its purpose, is the *pinna nobilis*, whose silky tuft, by the Italians called *lana pesce*, is made into stockings and gloves, and which the ancients here were said to have used for the delicate gauze dresses of the dancing-girls.

In spite of Taranto's curious situation, its two seas, its islands and its Irish saint, its strange fish and its garlands of *cozze nere*, my most vivid memory of this city of so many musical memories is musical. However, they are not of the tarantella, for there was neither spider nor *fiesta* to set it in motion. Not of old Archytas, master as well as jack of all trades, who ruled the city so wisely in the fourth century B. C. and is said to have found leisure in which to invent a mechanical flying bird, to write the first dissertation on music, to build "a machine to execute various tunes," and to locate the traditional spacings of the holes of the flute! Not of Giovanni Paisiello, born here, who was so shabbily treated by fate; for, having written ninety-four forgotten operas of his own, he is made a living memory by Rubens' portrait of him in the Louvre. No, Taranto recalls to me the absurdly amusing conventionalities and unconventionalities of provincial opera.



The opera was Puccini's *La Tosca*, the hour nine, which is the usual hour announced for starting a performance in the Italian theater. There was no advance sale of tickets for there appears, as a rule, to be no decision more than a day in advance as to the change of bill, at least none is announced until the bill poster makes his morning round of the available wall spaces and obliterates the name and cast of last night's opera with those of to-night's.

Nothing I could have asked the attendant at the theater box-office could have surprised him more than my inquiry before noon for a ticket for the evening presentation, unless it would have been to ask the name of to-morrow's opera. If that is known it is masonically sealed. Business appears to pick up a bit in the evening after half past eight. As I approached the theater I noted signs of life. There were friendly gatherings before the doors. But the lobby was empty. A little apprehensive of what tickets might be left I approached the window and bowed low. This is quite usual. The obeisance is not a matter of courtesy, it is made necessary by the position of the only opening available for communication with the ticket-seller on the other side. It is rarely more than waist high and barely large enough for the exchange of cash and its equivalent. The invisible attendant was amiable. There was no occasion for apprehension. Not a ticket had yet been sold.

I took a ticket for a *poltrona* for which the price was eleven lire, at a time when a lira was worth five American cents or twopence halfpenny English. In addition to this the price of a detached ticket of admission and an amusement tax was required, an additional seven lire. The two little pieces of flimsy paper received in exchange for this trifling sum entitled me to admission and occupancy of what was considered one of the best seats in the house. The government requires that one or two presentations of each opera be given for the people at prices greatly reduced below the standard scale. This, however, was not such an occasion. Opera costs little in Italy and outside a few of the larger cities it is not worth it. But the people as a whole are satisfied, their standards being on the whole about as high, or as low, as the prices.

The permeating sense of leisure drove me back again into the streets, for a stroll and a coffee. Returning in half an hour I found something of a crowd before the theater and the lobby in a mild state of riot. The sale of tickets was at last in progress and there was a good demand. But there was no order, no queue, just a disorderly swarm about the little window, much rough but unresented elbowing and squeezing, appeals and protests, the appearance of anger, but at bottom the best of understanding and good humor. It is what happens in Italy, not only in

the theaters, but at railway ticket-offices, in post-offices, and everywhere that there are no artificial ways to enforce a line. Italians have no voluntary sense of such order. The crowd and bustle gave promise of a full theater.

Inside, however, all was empty. It was nine o'clock by the big disk over the proscenium, but the advertised hour obviously meant nothing, unless it meant the hour at which the opera would not begin. The only human beings in evidence were the venerable ushers, old men and women whose gossiping voices came out of the shadows before their figures. I was led to the center of the auditorium and ceremoniously deposited in solitary state in my *poltrona* for a tip of one lira.

The plan of the house is, of course, like that of every other Italian theater, and here the houses where opera is sung are also called theaters. It is of a type which dates back to the continental model of the early nineteenth century. There is an ever so slightly sloping floor in the shape of a horseshoe. The seats in the half of these nearer the stage are called *poltrone*, those behind are called *poltroncine*. As a rule they are made of iron tubing, the *poltrone* wider and somewhat better upholstered than the cheaper *poltroncine* in the rear. The chairs in each row are attached to one another, but the rows are rarely attached to the floor. During an evening there is apt

to be some gradual and not unintentional movement of these rows, so that, though one may start the opera with comfortable knee room, the last act may be endured in a contortion. Around the floor the walls rise in three or four tiers of *palchi* (boxes), and just under the ceiling are two or perhaps three rows of benches which are given the lofty name of *anfiteatro* (amphitheater).

As the audience drifted in, it at first revealed little to distinguish it from the commonplaces of other such assemblies. There was an uncommon number of children and babies. Whole families seemed to have deserted the home for the theater. A box which had seats for six, and permitted a view of the stage from at least the front two chairs, took in, with the suggestion of the assistance of a shoe-horn, ten and a dozen occupants. The youngsters sat on their elders' laps; as many as could drew to the railing, others stood up behind, so that the party presented a kind of bouquet of expectant faces. Old fossils, who looked like barnacles on the city's social life, trailed in, and were led wearily to their locations, a bit like a horse who might be led to water but couldn't be made to drink. The audience finally found its particular character in the gradual arrival of officers and sailors from the naval base who sprinkled their uniforms all over the floor and walls. So much of a naval gathering did it turn out to be that it would not have surprised me



if the curtain had risen to the piping of a boatswain's whistle.

The ladies all took their seats on arrival and removed their hats, too; but the men kept their hats on their heads and remained standing before their chairs, with their backs to the stage, scrutinizing every part of the theater with many a ceremonial bow from the waist to some, but to familiars a mere flutter of up-turned fingers.

The buzz of conversation soon made the auditorium alive. To this was added the raucous voices of an old man, old women and a few boys, offering programs and librettos, candy, cigarettes and newspapers. The newspapers found a ready sale to those who came unaccompanied. No one seemed to care for a program, which explained the absence of advertisements on it. This may have been economy, or because the cast had been on display all day in so many conspicuous places. But likelier, I suspected, because the artists were all old friends and well known to the audience.

The vender of the librettos did a poor trade for similar reasons, for the operas were sung in a tongue that every one understood, and repetition had made them known by heart. The repertoire of a provincial season is limited; generally it is chosen from the works of Verdi and Puccini, with an opera or two of a few other Italian composers. The solitary foreign

opera which has a wide appeal in Italy is Bizet's *Carmen*, and it, too, is invariably sung in Italian.

At half past nine the musicians had not yet appeared in their pit. But no one was impatient. There were indeed harbingers of what was to come. One might have known the opera of the evening without bill-board or program or libretto. *La Tosca* was in the air. A tenor, apparently just behind the curtain, tried out his voice with scales, arpeggios and a few familiar phrases suggestive of Cavaradossi's music. Nobody listened. There was no disillusionment. On the floor detached individuals with no one to talk to held individual rehearsals, and hummed or sang in subdued voice snatches from *Tosca*'s arias, or the sacristan's familiar bits. The same naive performance proceeded from some of the boxes. Up-stairs from the benches of the amphitheater the less mannered, but not less musical, whistled the same bits. They know every note and how it should be sung, or at least how it is traditionally sung, and they are exacting about it, though they have no higher standards than their own experiences—and that is low at Taranto. There was another rehearsal on, back-stage—that of the chimes in the first act. It was perhaps not so much a rehearsal as that every one behind the curtain, in passing the bells, seemed to take a whack at them. And no one minded that.

The drop-curtain had two openings through

painted doorways, with heavy flaps hung behind them like the padded leather screens which hang before the doorways of Italian churches to keep out the cold weather. Here they were intended to facilitate curtain calls. But altar boys, vested for the church scene of the first act, gave another foretaste of the opera preparing behind the curtain by exposing themselves at the edges of the openings, handsome dirty lads and dirtily clad in crimson cassocks and cottas of course lace, but perhaps not the less realistic for that.

The boys were sometimes edged out by their seniors, likewise fully costumed and made up, who peeped with a mere pretense of peeping. Every one saw them and some hailed them, and when one of them recognized a friend he put the tips of all the fingers of one hand against its thumb and shook the cluster in friendly howdy-do, and passed a "*Saluto!*" or "*Come-sta*" or called his friends by name in a whisper that the acoustics made audible to every one. There was a perfectly friendly rapport between the artists and the audience. They met daily, if not here in the theater, then at other times in the cafés or in the piazza.

Meantime the musicians had begun to dribble in. Not out of the depths below the stage. Not one. They strolled down the aisles, hats on of course, an instrument case in one elbow, the arm of a friend

drawn over the other, and together they chatted their way to the orchestra pit. Those without other acquaintances made visits or chatted among themselves, or caressingly tried out strings or reeds and phrases with their instruments, lubricating fingers and elbows, creating a babel in full cry, until the electrician began to throw his switches, and section by section darkness fell upon the house. Then every one sat down, hats disappeared, and during another interminable two minutes the musical chatter gradually expended itself, and quiet and silence matched the darkness. Such a moment is one of thrilling expectation. It was also, indeed, a quarter till ten o'clock.

The maestro rushed from somewhere across the darkness to his desk, as if he had tried to get there sooner but could not, his life being crowded with such a plenitude of demands. That dash seemed to explain all the delay—if, indeed, any explanation were needed, for no one else acted as if he thought so—it had been the fault of the maestro, though he had done his best, and here he was under the wire at last like a spent race-horse. No, not spent; not he. His silhouette, sharpened by the light reflected from the lighted score before him, showed him with his arms spread in a kind of dynamic benediction. With the first thrust of his baton the orchestra was off; and the show was on, at least the second phase of it.

The maestro was in full evening dress. He al-



ways is, though no one else be, and no one else here among audience or musicians was. He was elegance itself if you were not close enough to see his purple socks, or the celluloid dickey, or the spots on his satin lapels where the spaghetti had spattered, or the unattached cuffs which occasionally insisted on slipping too far over the thumb knuckle.

His performance entertained when no one else's did. When the curtain was up he acted all the parts, occasionally he sang them, and he apparently gave permission for every note uttered by fiddle, flute, horn, cymbal or voice. His wand seemed to tap the tone as if, had he not known just when to lunge or slash or point, no tone would have come, and the whole performance would have dried up on the spot. He must have had a good laundress, generous with starch, for his collar, though weakening, might be said to have still been standing at the end of the first act in spite of his tremendous gyrations, his epic punches and thrusts.

About the middle of the first act his hair came into play. It had arrived carefully brushed, and no one, unaccustomed to his kind, could have suspected its possibilities. As he swung his arms in great circles, and swayed and bent his body first to the stage and then to the musicians on one side or the other, drawing out passionate passages and piling crescendoes, the hair loosened, then separated, and part

stood up like the needles of the fretful porcupine, the rest hung a tangled mass before his eyes, and got into them, and part of the time he shook it back with heroic leonine tosses of his head, and the rest of the time he spared his left hand, as if taking a desperate chance, and thrust it back, but he did this so expertly that not a note was missed. Singers and fiddlers appeared unconscious of it and went straight ahead on the serious business of the evening.

But I thought the maestro did nothing so fine as, after giving the entire performance of principals and chorus and musicians, he finally poised the whole artistic fabric three feet above his head on the vibrant point of his baton as the curtain fell, and, after laying down the magic wand, instead of swooning or rushing out as he had rushed in, he merely strolled calmly away from his desk the coolest person in the theater. It was a gesture of restraint which seemed to say, "I did it all, but it was nothing—that is nothing for me, absolutely nothing. They are moved and you are moved, but I am not. Let the singers join hands and May-dance to the footlights, applaud them; but I know who did it."

ICILY he disappeared and was seen no more, that is, not until sixty seconds later when the curtains revealed the singers on a third call, and there was a disordered scramble among them as if they were lost, bereft of something, as if there were a final missing

detail to crown the feast, a laurel hunting for a brow. They ogled off stage anxiously, and it was the soprano who found the missing link. She rushed to the wings and seized it, and the other artists surrounded her and supported her. When the colorful mass reached center, and straightened out and, hand clasping hand, swept again to the footlights, all smiles, bows and curtsies, there in the center was the modest, or perhaps only superior, maestro, scorning it all, trying to lift before him two hundred pounds of tenor on his right and two hundred and fifty pounds of soprano on his left, all as if he were the victim of a ruse, and wished he could have avoided it. But when has a maestro so succeeded?

Nevertheless, out of a lot of mediocre playing and poor singing, these provincial artists did get the opera over. They have an instinct for it. Nothing daunts them. Their voices may fail them, but their acting never does. It may be bad, it may be terrible, but it is acting. By no conceivable possibility could one ever mistake it for anything else.

Now the curious thing about the visible manifestations of the maestro, is that in spite of all his demonstrative attentions to the artists on the stage, they appeared to draw no inspiration whatever from him. On the contrary, they seemed to think nothing, remember nothing, say or sing or do nothing, for which they did not get the inspiration or permission,

out of the corners of their eyes from a mysterious source under a not too small hood in the center of the footlights. There hid the prompter.

He was the artist's memory, and frequently his voice. And of the latter too often there was a superfluous generosity on his part. And so, at times, we got two performances. One came in a shrill whisper from under the prompter's hood, and an echo came from the artists. No matter where they moved, or in what direction they faced, they maintained a helpless hang-dog petitioning gaze toward the hood. Tosca and Cavaradossi embraced rapturously, Scarpia shook a threatening fist above Tosca's head, Tosca planted a table knife in his baritone bosom, and at the peak of their arias they made all-embracing gestures at the audience, but their eyes never left the fascinating, word-giving, action-giving, all-highest prompter. At the end of the act this gentleman made no appearance on the stage. He must have been genuinely relieved of his tense responsibility, and probably sought renewed fortitude in at least a dozen or so cups of *caffè espresso*.

The entr'acte was no mere matter of minutes. The audience obviously had no illusions of expedition in the scene-shifting. Perhaps it would have resented a brief intermission, for like all Italian audiences, it coveted leisure to stroll, and sip coffee and liqueurs, and argue about the performers and their perform-



ance, and to resume the always absorbing lifelong Italian discussion of politics. So the house rose in a body and dispersed. An unadvised foreigner who remains in his chair during the entr'acte in an Italian theater is apt to find himself alone in an otherwise empty auditorium.

After a lengthy half an hour the audience and the performers remembered that there was more to the opera, and reassembled, and the other acts were eventually given with other long intermissions. Finally the conclusion of the diversion was put off until early in the next calendar day, although *La Tosca* is not a long opera. There are indeed other works which, with the assistance of a late beginning and long intervals, do not release the audience until one and one-thirty o'clock in the morning. And no matter how poor the performance in these modest theaters of the smaller cities, the natives revel in them; they may be found diverting to the foreigner, also, if he knows where to find the fun.

## CHAPTER IV

### A LAND OF CONICAL HOUSES

HUNTING THE TRULLI OF APULIA—HINTS OF THE  
LEVANT—AN OBSCURE RAILWAY AND ITS PASSENGERS—  
A SOIL OF LIMESTONE—THE TRULLO AND ITS CONE—  
THE MOST ECONOMICAL HOUSE IN THE WORLD—A CONE  
FOR EACH ROOM—VISION OF A ROMAN CAMP ABAN-  
DONED AND TURNED TO STONE—WHAT THE SCIENTISTS  
SAY—EXTERNAL DECORATIONS OF THE CONES—PLAN OF  
THE TRULLO—ALCOVE BEDS—ALBEROBELLO, WHERE  
THE TRULLO COMES TO TOWN—A NATIONAL MONU-  
MENT

ONE of the least known curiosities of Italy, or of Europe, are the trulli; and one of the least frequented parts of Italy is the *plaga dei trulli*. These curious buildings lie in that region to which they give their name behind the low ridge of hills which crowds the railway to a narrow rim of Adriatic coast between the cities of Bari and Brindisi, the last two seaports from which western Europe sails away to the East. This region is aloof and apart, living its own life, in its own secluded world, which is in some respects a world with a physiognomy unmatched anywhere else.

Science is dubious about it, and so holds a cautious tongue. Tourism knows nothing of it. The guide-books treat it cavalierly, that is to say they snub it. Even the Italians roundabout it, there at the foot of Italy, think little or at least say little of it; and in other parts of the peninsula, as well as in the wider world of which the peninsula is a part, the *plaga dei trulli* is as little known as are its unique habitations.

I happened on it, or at least the mention of it, at Taranto.

Having made some acquaintance of the pleasant city, I asked what there was to draw one out toward the foot-hills of those mountains which cut off the afternoon sun on the side which is Basilicata; or what up country on that narrow littoral which is the northern sector of the province of Apulia; or what down country on the flat plain which is more easily identified as the heel of Italy.

And, in reply, one said: "Drive along the western shore of our gulf to the Castle of Pulsano and see its vast steep outside stairway which rises from the pavement to its highest battlements, and note the huge stone at the top, so suspended on a spoke that it could be dropped on any assailants achieving the head of the steps, crushing them and blocking the passage."

Another said: "It is farther, but why not see, above its deep ravines, the little city of Matera, sometimes called the subterranean city, where actually a

great proportion of the population lives inside the earth, and where two of the churches are mere grottoes with only their façades of artificial masonry."

And yet others said: "Drive toward the heel and at Oria you will be high enough to see at once both the Mediterranean and the Adriatic." . . . "Go a little farther to Manduria, where the marvelous well, the so-called Well of Pliny, no matter how much water be drawn from it, remains always at the same level." . . . "Why not visit Lecce, which is called, on account of its beautiful buildings, the Florence of Apulia, and among its many treasures has at least one of the loveliest church doors in all the world." . . . "Go to the eastern end of the heel to Otranto, still a little sad as it thinks of its fall, in 1480, to the besieging Turks, who with cruelly methodical deliberation massacred twelve thousand of its twenty thousand inhabitants between sunrise and sunset of a single day. And from the ramparts of the castle there, if the day be fair, you may see in the east the rosy mountains of Albania."

But in all these and other suggestions there was nothing so really novel as to be genuinely arresting and provocative, until some one, hitherto unheard, diffidently ventured: "Have you ever seen the trulli?"

"Trulli? Trulli? Where is or what are trulli?"

Then it was explained that these are (for it is the Italian plural of which trullo is the singular) the



oddly fashioned houses of the peasants of that restricted neighborhood in the center of Apulia, locally known as the *plaga dei trulli*. Moreover, their bizarre pattern is the only one seen, and is indeed unlike any other house which man has built in which to live.

Having been told this and much more with ten thousand kindly words and gestures, I knew that at last there was unhackneyed quarry for the hunt, and so set out to seek the trulli. They were to be found, it seems, hidden away between the obscure little towns of Francavilla and Alberobello, on the edge of the low limestone range of Le Murge, the billowing hills which parallel the Adriatic between the two flat plains, on the south the Tavoliere di Lecce and on the north the Tavoliere di Puglia. Literally *tavoliere* means checker-board, and the little rectangular farms in these two plains, contrasting with each other in the varying tones of the grain or grass or trees planted on them, perfectly sustain the figure.

Francavilla came to light twenty-one miles east of Taranto, on the line to Brindisi, and here a leisurely second-rate branch line meanders through the rolling country thirty-five miles on northwestward to Alberobello, and thence in the same direction forty-two miles on to Bari.

Leaving Taranto by its Great Sea the railway skirts its Little Sea and then trails eastward across green fields dripping with the blood-red of poppies;

past orchards of peaches, plums, cherries, almonds and young olives,—or comparatively young olives, for the youth of any olive trees I've ever seen dates back by centuries; past grazing stretches mottled with yellow cows and black sheep; a level terrain and rich as the numerous well-built farm establishments signify. The cloudless sky was as blue as an inverted sea. The sunny atmosphere was brilliant and had the crystal translucence that it has in near-by Greece, revealing distances microscopically and bringing them in detail to the naked eye.

The buildings as far as the horizon are white, whether detached in settings of green or massed in villages. Nowhere is a gable seen, for the housetops are invariably flat. One misses the bell-towers, the campaniles, those perpendicular poems in masonry that grace Italy in nearly every other section. But more than these one misses the slender fingers of the minarets, and the low, white, hemispherical domes above the Moslem bath-houses, for air and architecture here suggest Italy less than they do the neighboring Levant whose rim is just across the narrow Adriatic.

The change of trains at Francavilla took us deeper into the heart of the country. The carriages on the little branch railway reaching into the foot-hills of Le Murge were mere toys for size and represented the last word in construction of about three-quarters

of a century ago. There were no second-class compartments and only one of the first-class, and that was empty. Here third-class only was alive. It seemed the more so as the carriage was not sealed off into compartments. Its wide-open windows let in sun and air on its well-swept floor and gleaming varnished benches, and revealed a simplicity and cleanliness of place and passengers which was an encouragement to acquaintance. Here one seemed really to meet the people at home.

There were three young girls with serene and regular-featured faces which were perfect copies out of Raphael's canvases, but Wilde said that Nature always imitates Art. With them was an older woman who wore the full woolen skirt and gaily embroidered bodice and white coif which were obviously the traditional costume of some near-by neighborhood, and stamped her as probably a household servant sent to chaperon the gentle *signorine*. This evidently is a part of Italy where women fare forth. Across from them sat a Fascist in his black shirt and gray uniform, his Robin Hood bonnet at a rakish angle. Over one shoulder and under the other arm swung an ammunition belt, and his holster was bulging and businesslike. In his gloved hand he carried his *bastone*—not a delicate swagger-stick, but a stout cudgel that looked as if it might be "loaded." He was on some errand of righting Italy, making it safe and clean and busy,

refreshed and strong. But en route, I observed, he kept his big dark eyes wide open on the three maidens. There was a man with a 'cello; a boy with his shoulders draped with a garland of *cozze nere*, the tiny black clams of Taranto, destined for an inland feast; a swarthy peasant woman carrying a drooping fuzzy bouquet of four hares; a sailor, on leave or homeward bound from completed service, with a blue plaid bundle whose whole content of invisible cheese and sausage and fruit was suggested by a loaf sticking out of one opening and the slender neck of his fiasco of wine sticking out of the other. There was a blind fiddler, feeling out new fields no doubt, and the cheeriest man in the car, singing to himself all the way. At one end a young couple and their baby crowded in, but they would not have been noticeable had it not been that the infant was bound like a white cloth package, rigid and straight, with only head and hands exposed, exactly like a glazed terra-cotta bambino by della Robbia come to life out of the tympanum over a Tuscan church door.

Every one was settled and the doors had all been slammed and the functionaries had begun to whistle the train on its way when, breathless but laughing, in popped a little old woman in simple peasant black, but running largely to umbrella. That accessory was green, and it bulged like an enormous cabbage, inviting guesses as to its contents. Was it her improvisa-



tion of a market basket, or a traveling-bag? One guess was as good as another, for it was securely held, where the rib ends clustered near the handle, not with strap or string, however, but with good stout wire.

Once the train was under way it soon left the checker-board of Lecce behind and climbed into the rolling country of the Murgian foot-hills. Within a few miles the whole aspect of life and nature changed. At first the brown soil became delicately flecked with white, the first outcroppings of these limestone ridges. Gradually the stones increased in size and numbers and, with this increase, the efforts of the peasants to dispose of them came into evidence with the low, loosely piled stone walls which began to line the landscape. Mile by mile the walls increased in breadth and height to a size ridiculously beyond what was practical as a barrier, tapering slightly from a five- or six-foot base and rising four or five feet in height. As they increased in size they increased in number, making the fields smaller and smaller. Though there were more and more stones in the fences, scarcely less seemed to remain in the white flecked soil, which nevertheless supported grain and vines and fruit trees. Another result of the effort to rid the soil of stones were the great cubical ricks of them which rose in the middle of some fields.

Just here in the midst of this stone world one comes upon the curious cottages called trulli, or, as

sometimes pronounced in the local dialect, *truddhi*. Locally also one hears them referred to as *cassali* and *cassade*, but these are regional references to them merely as small country dwellings, farmhouses or huts, without reference to the generic character they take from their own distinguishing features.

A trullo is at once recognized by its high conical roof rising like a pointed dome above its low perpendicular side walls. It is built of small flat slabs or slates of field limestone and the construction is "dry," that is, without mortar or cement to hold the stones together. The self-supporting, dry-constructed, conical roof is one of the wonders of stone masonry.

These are possibly the most economical houses in the civilized world. The material costs the builder nothing. He is not even at the expense of carting since he finds the stones on the spot where he builds. The stones are used in the flat irregular form in which they crop out of the soil, so there is no cost for working up the material. The farmer by gathering the stones for his house helps to clear his land, and so places more soil at his disposal for cultivation. Moreover construction costs nothing except time, for each farmer builds his own trullo without the expense of architect or mason. Finally, it is a building which stands indefinitely with a minimum of renewal or repair.

In this region of the *plaga dei trulli* there are no

farmhouses which are not trulli, that is, there are none but conical roofs as far as the eye can see. And, by a curiosity of structural custom here, one may at a distance tell at a glance of how many rooms each house consists, for if it have more than one room then each room has its own conical roof. The trullo with one cone may represent a storehouse, or an animal shelter, or the dwelling of one of the poorest of the *contadini*. According to the means of the builder, or the increasing size of his family, as he adds rooms he adds a cone above each of them, so that larger trulli present a family group of three, four, five or even seven or eight cones in each domestic unit.

Seen alone each trullo with its squat side walls and its roof of one or several cones presents a sufficiently curious object, as if it were a cairn, a prehistoric tomb, or a fabulously gigantic beehive. Here, however, one does not find the isolated specimen. They are everywhere about, as far as the eye can see. In the little commune of Martina Franca alone there are nearly two thousand trulli. There are more trulli in the twenty-five miles from Francavilla to Alberobello, the *plaga dei trulli*, than there are nuraghi in the entire island of Sardinia.

Seen in the bewildering multitude of this strange landscape, a cone or a group of cones every few hundred feet in all directions, for miles and miles, the effect is without parallel. It suggests not only a



*Photo by Altinari*

The Trulli, or Conical Houses, of Alberobello, in the Province of Apulia





A Street in Alberobello, the town of Conical Houses



*Photo by Alinari*

A Trullo or Uncemented Conical House in Apulia

world of queer tombs or giant beehives, but a world of petrified haystacks or a vast military camp of ancient Roman tents, abandoned and turned to stone. The effect is elfin and unreal, and indescribably fascinating, some fantasy of an illustrator of a fairy-story come to life.

Then the train comes to the hill towns of Cisterna Città and Martina Franca, or even to Locorotondo, and as one looks up at their roof-lines one is reminded that though there are trulli exclusively in the landscape of the country, there is not a single trullo in the make-up of the towns until one reaches one town which is the unique exception near the district's edge.

The historians and archeologists seem a bit chary of committing themselves on the subject of the trulli. Michele Gervasio<sup>1</sup> says that they are all modern, whereas Giuseppe Grassi<sup>2</sup> says, "They appear to be extremely ancient and prehistoric," and quotes De Giorgi as calling them "the last word in microlithic construction." Cosimo Bertacchi<sup>3</sup> says, "The trullo is a survival of the remotest period." The trulli suggest to Gervasio the possibility of their descent from the *specchie*, prehistoric buildings of a megalithic character, remains of which have been found in many places in the heel of Italy. "They look like heaps of

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<sup>1</sup>*Dolmen e La Civiltà del Bronzo nelle Puglie*. 1913. Pp. 332-333.

<sup>2</sup>*Tramonto del Secolo XVIII in Martina Franca*. 1926. Page 35.

<sup>3</sup>*Puglia*. 1926. Pp. 217-220.

stone," he says, "amassed in the form of a depressed cone and are usually from ten to twelve meters high."<sup>1</sup>

These writers as well as Bertaux, Maggiulli and Lenorment, bracket the trulli with the *specchie* of near-by Lecce, the talayots of the Balearic Islands and the nuraghi of the island of Sardinia. As Gervasio remarks, the remains of the *specchie*, however, permit no decision as to them. Between the trulli and the talayots and the nuraghi, except for dry construction, there is no common feature. The nuraghi survive in a greater number than the talayots and, though in ruins, in a state more nearly permitting a comparison. Gervasio truly says that a comparison between them and the trulli can only be suggested in a broad manner. The nuraghi are enormous solitary towers, conical in their rise but truncated, so that the cone never converges to its pointed peak as in a trullo. Moreover, the nuraghi cone rises directly from the ground instead of from a low perpendicular walled base, as in the case of the trullo. The nuraghe is further distinguished from the trullo by the fact that inside each contains two rooms, one above the other, connected by a stairway in the wall.

The word "trullo" as used to designate these Apulian cottages seems to derive from the Latin *torullos*, with a general significance meaning cupola.

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<sup>1</sup>Gervasio. *Op. cit.*

There would appear, moreover, to be an affinity between this word and the word "trullus," the name of the great domed chamber in the Imperial Byzantine Palace in Constantinople. The Constantinople Council of 692 was held in the Trullus and from it took its name, the second Trullan Council or the Council in Trullo.

At the Martina Franca station I descended from the train and with five others took a place in the only carry-all in the town, drawn by the only horse in the town, so far as I saw. The conveyance might have held four normally. The poor horse was a model of slavish endurance over a mile that rose sharply all the way to the town proper on the apex of the hill, where, in more warlike and predatory ages, Martina Franca was better able to maintain the independence reflected in its name.

It harbors a population of over twenty thousand. Under its coating of whitewash it might pass for a huge monolith of chalk sculptured into architectural forms. When the first houses of the town shut out the green country landscape along with a world of trulli cones, where one is conscious not at all of angles, it was for a moment a bit startling to find oneself in a wholly white world of straight lines and angles only, a world entirely without curves. Here is not a single trullo cone, not even an eave, for every roof is flat.



To ask any questions about the trulli in Martina Franca produces instant reference to Professor Giuseppe Grassi, the regional historian; and any such questions asked him directly act as a key to his enthusiastic aid. Whatever may be his occupations at other times, so long as I remained in Martina Franca they were exclusively and unselfishly social. He gave his attention wholly to trudging over the neighboring hills with me, making entrance easy to every type of trullo, and citing and explaining their characteristics and variations.

It is astonishing the apparently needless waste of material and effort that goes into the building of a trullo. Its side walls though seldom so high as eight feet vary in thickness from five to seven. This might be interpreted as a survival of an age of defended habitations, but it is at least forced on man here by the necessity to rid his land of rock so that he may till its rich lime-laden soil. Practically also it serves to keep out the blistering heat of summer and in winter to conserve every degree of precious warmth given off by the handful of coals in the solitary fireplace.

Originally the walls were circular, and they are so even now in the humbler single-room cottages. The better and prevailing pattern is a walled rectangle supporting the cone. These country cottages are everywhere of one story only, which accents the surprise at often finding simple, narrow, stone steps,

which have no contact with the interior of the house, at one end of a wall. They can lead only to the exterior margin about the base of the conical roof, for purposes unexplained and unimagined.

As a rule there is only one opening in the entire walled circumference, a single entrance door. Of windows, even under a group of several cones indicating several rooms, there are none worth the name. Occasionally an opening appears in the wall, but it is rarely larger than fifteen inches square, and the wall about it is so thick that the opening can serve only for air, for a minimum of light, and not at all for sunshine. The view out of it is often not unlike that through a rectangular pipe.

The door is generally the height of a short man's head, with a horizontal lintel. The variation on this, in the more pretentious trulli, is uniform. In such a trullo the wall opens for a deep round arch. The end of this passageway is walled, and this thin secondary wall is pierced by a small rectangular door. There are occasional instances of such a doorway made somewhat ornamental with an angled apex above the arched entrance.

The cones, as indicated, are built without mortar or cement. The rough heavy slates are usually laid two and often three to the width of a course, the courses circling and narrowing in diameter as they approach the top. The higher and more slender the

cone is the more graceful and beautiful, but it is the squatter cones which especially excite wonder as to how these dry unkeystoned structures hold themselves up.

The Apulian is fond of decorating the exterior of his trullo, but his resources seem few and his results are primitive. He generally finishes off the apex of the cone with a sort of button of cement. Occasionally this gives place to a sphere, or a cross, an acorn, a pine-cone or even a vase form, and I saw rare instances of the use of an image of a saint or of a cement eagle with folded wings.

The only other general decoration he indulges in is made by whitewashing certain stone-ends on the rise of the cone, and so picking out designs, in rude patterns, visible for some distance across country. Most often the design displays the owner's or dweller's own initials in letters three or four feet high; or a cross, frequently with strangely drooping arms; or the single letter M, a pious offering to Maria or the Madonna, sometimes with the lower ends of the perpendiculars of the letter extended downward and drawn together in curves, making of it the suggestion of the outline of a heart. Also I saw two circles with a perpendicular line through them both, much like the outline of two apples on a spit, but no explanation was offered of it as a symbol. Sometimes the dweller in a trullo will indulge himself so far in such decora-

tion as to outline a great cross or a two-armed amphora with his initials on either side of it, but among these simple people this was considered ornateness carried to the point of ostentation.

Nature sometimes adds its own note of decoration to these austere little buildings, especially if the owner have a walltop margin around the base of his cone, and if he be untidy enough to let dust accumulate there. The winds that catch up the rich dry earth catch up seed and pollen with it, and when, after many years perhaps, the deposit becomes thick enough to sustain an ever so delicate root-tendrils, the spring rains and summer sun draw out delicate leaves and blossoms. Then the margin is feathered about with slender blades of grass, with the blue and red and yellow and purple blooms of wild flowers, all producing a gay floral cornice.

Entering a trullo, whether of one or more rooms, one invariably finds the stone fireplace directly opposite the door. Here the kettle is set steaming, the meals are cooked, and in cold weather the family huddles about it for the sake of any warming radiation in the little pit of coals.

If the owner be poor the bed is pitched in a stone alcove in the wall, and as this is a poor country the alcove bed prevails. Even in the houses of the well-to-do there were no twin beds, not even a single bed. On the contrary the beds, whether out in the room on



their own frames or in alcoves on stone supports, all seemed broader than they were long. Generally they were mountain high with feather-ticks and puffy comforters.

My curiosity about the design and workmanship of one of these gave just the encouragement needed to the *padrona*, and she had almost entirely disappeared under the bed before she emerged with a treasure-box of coverlets she had patched and embroidered, but never, never used. They reflected patience and a certain nimbleness of needle, but the patterns were crude and the materials indicated that here, as everywhere that economy prevails, few scraps of old cloth go permanently into the rag-bag. But to her these quilts were treasures, and her wide beaming eyes begged some praise for them. She got it.

The floors are limestone slates like the walls and cone, roughly laid in general, and are covered with nothing more than an occasional straw mat or, more rarely, with a scrap of carpet.

In passing from one room into another, one is immediately struck by the extraordinary thickness of the interior walls, giving an interior doorway the depth of a passage. This is because a *trullo* is in general built by the addition of room after room to the original single unit, and the wall between rooms was at first an outside wall. A man anticipating the addition of other rooms to his *trullo* constructs a closed

archway on the side against which he later expects to build. When he adds another cone, that is to say another room, he breaks down the filling of the arch, but I do not remember to have seen any doors swung in these deep interior doorways.

If a trullo have more than one door admitting from the outside, then any such additional outside door admits into a room which, though structurally attached to the general unit, is without access to it by a door through an inner wall. Such a room is usually devoted to live stock, tools, grain or other storage. The family house themselves in the multi-room unit surrounded by six- or seven-foot walls through which entrance is had by one single door. Here again is analogy with the primitive defensive idea, the castle of the single gate. Whether a descendant of it or not, thus at least the trullo carried out the idea of the fortified home. But it does not explain the exclusion of the defenseless live stock and the grain and other material wealth and dependence of the family, especially in a state of siege.

Not the least curious feature of these structures is that the conical roof of the trullo produces a conical ceiling on the interior, and as each room has its separate cone, so every single room has a conical ceiling. One feels in these rude rooms in the presence of the primitive suggestion of the vaulted chambers which in Gothic architecture flowered with such beautiful

lines and decorations. Only in the better houses are the walls and high arched ceilings plastered over and whitewashed.

In every hut we entered we were offered wine and other refreshments with a simple but gracious hospitality. When, once, we accepted, the head of the house surprised me by the manner in which he drew the wine and indeed by the place in which he stored it. Instead of going to a cupboard, or to a closet or a sideboard, he got down on his knees and displaced a stone flag a generous foot square. The opening was too small to admit a human being, so the space below could not be a cellar into which he could descend. It was in fact a stone cement-lined well or tank under the floor. A wall centered on the square opening dividing the tank into two chambers. In one he kept white wine and in the other red. To withdraw the wine he let down a hollow reed and by suction drew up the liquid into an amphora-like carafe from which it was served.

The way on north from Martina Franca is through a continuing countryside exclusively of scattered cones, grotesque, fantastic and bizarre, until at Alberobello one finds the single instance of trulli appearing in the agglomeration of an actual town. Here is a compact forest of stone cones. The streets are lined with them, every opening presents them in perspective, they huddle shoulder to shoulder, wall to wall, in all shapes and sizes and groupings.

When, at sight of this strangest of all European towns, I exclaimed: "Well, seeing this for the first time is an experience I can never have again," my cicerone rebuked me, without intending, with the pleasant philosophical rejoinder: "But the memory of it is something no one can ever take from you."

Alberobello presents variations of the trullo not seen elsewhere. Here, having come to town, the modest one-story cottage seems to have succumbed to the exigencies of a crowded life, and occasionally so far loses its homely countryside character as to take on a second story. But its original character clings to it in the thick walls and the conical roof. Here, too, are examples of the exchange made in a few instances during the seventeenth century, when the trulli adopted a second story and gave to the town houses built with eaves. The roofs of such houses are here laid with the native flat stones, in dry courses, just as in the cones, and, as in them, kept in place by no other means than a nice adjustment and their own weight.

From all the trulli of this town of trulli, where every size and age and shape and decoration is represented, the Italian Government has picked and crowned the largest of them, the so-called trullo *sov-rano*, to be a national monument, and thus extends to it protection from decay, destruction or any change whatever, in so far as possible.



Yet I thought the trulli out of place in town. They belong in the stony fields and on the rough hillsides from which they rise so naturally, and to the exclusion of any other type of building. There, though rough and crude, austere and for the greater number unadorned, they are somehow beautiful, as almost any object may be in its proper setting, a setting from which it has risen in obedience to a natural law. This is their own and only land, here they belong. It is in approaching the edge of the *plaga dei trulli*, beyond the little city of Putignano, that the first reappearing flat-roofed farmhouses seem out of place, intrusions and somehow ugly.

Coming down and out of the Murgian foot-hills here, a little nearer to the Adriatic, the rocky emanations are less insistent in the soil. Just in proportion as the rocks become fewer and disappear, so do the trulli thin out and disappear from the landscape. When Conversano is reached there is scarcely a cone in sight, though the sea is, in sunlit glimpses, where the hills dip low.

Travelers on the coast roads, motor or rail, between Bari and Brindisi, may observe some detached single-cone trulli. They may also, possibly, be puzzled in seeing other small circular stone and cement structures, consisting of from one to three or four shallow truncated cones superimposed on one another, each cone of lesser diameter than the one below.

These odd little buildings are used by the fishermen merely as a place for storing nets, or by the farmers as tool-houses or as temporary shelters in bad weather. As human habitations the trulli are peculiar to the highland a few miles inland, the district which they adorn in such bewildering numbers, and to which they give their name.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LAST HOME OF SANTA CLAUS

BARI WHERE SAINT NICHOLAS IS BURIED—A UNIVERSAL PATRON SAINT—ITALY UNACQUAINTED WITH SANTA CLAUS—ARCHED STREETS OF OLD BARI—FRIENDLY OLD LADIES—WINDOWS OF THE CATHEDRAL—CHURCH OF SAINT NICHOLAS—ALL ANGLES OUTSIDE AND ALL ARCHES INSIDE—HISTORIC SCENES—TOMB OF THE SAINT—HIS MANNA—HIS FEAST—LAND PROCESSION AND WATER PROCESSION—BRINGING SAINT NICHOLAS BACK TO BARI

THE mature sophisticates who do not believe in Santa Claus may be surprised to know that this amiable, generous and beloved gentleman lies interred in the city of Bari. Here at the lower end of the Adriatic he is much revered, but he is wholly unknown under the corrupt form of his name which has made him so celebrated elsewhere. Here in southern Italy he is known by his real name, which in Italian is San Nicola and, in its Anglicized form, Saint Nicholas.

So it is at once apparent why the fact that Bari is said to have the worst hotels in Italy is not, necessarily, its most distinguishing characteristic. If one

is willing to suffer the discomforts of a night or two in one of those hotels in exchange for what Saint Nicholas' city may offer in return, one will find it no bad bargain, especially if the visit be made the first week in May, the period of the pilgrimages, when the land and water fêtes are held in his honor. In order thoroughly to enjoy Bari one should, however, bring along some acquaintance with the traditional life of Saint Nicholas and with the Santa Claus cult which emanated from it.

Though buried in Italy, Saint Nicholas never lived there. He was born at Patara, in Lycia, Asia Minor, in the third century. Early in life he became a monk in the monastery of Sion, near Myra, the principal city of his native Lycia, and soon after was elected abbot. When his uncle, the metropolitan of the diocese of Myra, died, the convocation of bishops elected Abbot Nicholas to succeed him. Beyond these the other most authentic facts of his career were his participation in the Council of Nicæa in 325 and his death the next year.

All in addition that is told about him is of miraculous and legendary character. Some of the anecdotes will help to explain how he became one of the most popular patron saints in the Christian calendar, for at various times, in various parts of the world, he has been petitioned as the patron of children generally, but particularly of schoolboys and unwedded maids;



of sawyers, butchers, seedmen, pilgrims, packers, dyers, coopers, haberdashers and fishermen; and as the patron of mariners, including pirates, in which rôle he became the Christian prototype of the Greek sea-god Poseidon, on the site of whose temples round about the Mediterranean often rose a church dedicated to him. In addition to these obligations he is the patron, or one of the patrons, of Russia, Norway, the entire eastern coast of Italy, and a long list of scattered cities and localities. His patronage extends beyond people and places, however, for he is regarded also as the patron saint of animals, and in several countries on his calendar day a general and complete holiday is given to all beasts of burden.

One of the most popular of the many stories of his kindness and generosity is that of the rescue of the three dowerless maidens, thus recited in the *Golden Legend*:

“And when his father and mother were departed out of this life, he began to think how he might distribute his riches, and not to the praising of the world but to the honor and glory of God.

“And it was so that one, his neighbor, had then three daughters, virgins, and he was a nobleman: but for the poverty of them together, they were constrained, and in every purpose to abandon them to the sin of lechery, so that by the gain and winning of their infamy they might be sustained.

“And when the holy man Nicholas knew hereof he had great horror of this villainy, and threw by

night secretly into the house of the man a mass of gold wrapped in a cloth. And when the man arose in the morning, he found this mass of gold, and rendered to God therefor great thankings, and therewith he married his oldest daughter.

"And a little while after this holy hermit of God threw in another mass of gold, which the man found and thanked God, and purposed to wake for to know him that had aided him in his poverty.

"And after a few days Nicholas doubled the mass of gold, and cast it into the house of this man. He awoke by the sound of the gold and followed Nicholas, which fled from him, and he said to him:

"'Sir, flee not away so but that I may see and know thee.'

"Then he ran after him more hastily and knew that it was Nicholas; and anon he kneeled down, and would have kissed his feet, but the holy man would not, but required him not to tell nor discover this thing as long as he lived."

Thus he became the patron of girls desiring to get married. Gradually the three golden nuggets with which he redeemed the dowerless maidens became three golden apples or balls, and when pawnbrokers adopted Nicholas as their patron they hung the three golden balls before their doors, where they continue to appear all over the Christian world, as the emblem of their gild.

Of the many tales of his goodness to young people the one oftenest repeated, and with a refreshing variety of details in each telling, is that of how he brought to life the two schoolboys whom a butcher

had enticed into his house, and killed and salted down as he would salt down pork. Can it be that the butchers made Nicholas their patron to protect them from any temptation to repeat such an unholy, not to say unprofessional, practise?

Saint Nicholas' care of the seafaring is illustrated in another passage from the *Golden Legend*:

"It is read in a chronicle that the blessed Nicholas was at the Council of Nice; and on a day as a ship with mariners were perishing on the sea, they prayed and required devoutly Nicholas, servant of God, saying:

"If those things that we have heard of thee be true, prove them now."

"And anon a man appeared in his likeness and said: 'Lo! see ye me not? ye called me.'

"And then he began to help them in their exploit of the sea, and anon the tempest ceased.

"And when they were come to his church, they knew him without any man to show him to them, and yet they had never seen him. And then they thanked God and him of their deliverance.

"And he bade them attribute it to the mercy of God, and to their belief, and nothing to his merits."

To this attaches very naturally an incident which appears in a popular Serbian folk-song. According to this tale all the saints were assembled at a festival and a kind of loving-cup was passed from lip to lip. When the wine-cup was passed to Nicholas, however, he was nodding drowsily and let the cup fall. Saint Elias is represented as having roused him with his

elbow, whereat Saint Nicholas, blinking sleepily, asked a general pardon of his saintly friends:

"I have been very busy and I have been absent from your festival. The sea was rough and I had to give my help to three hundred ships that were in danger."

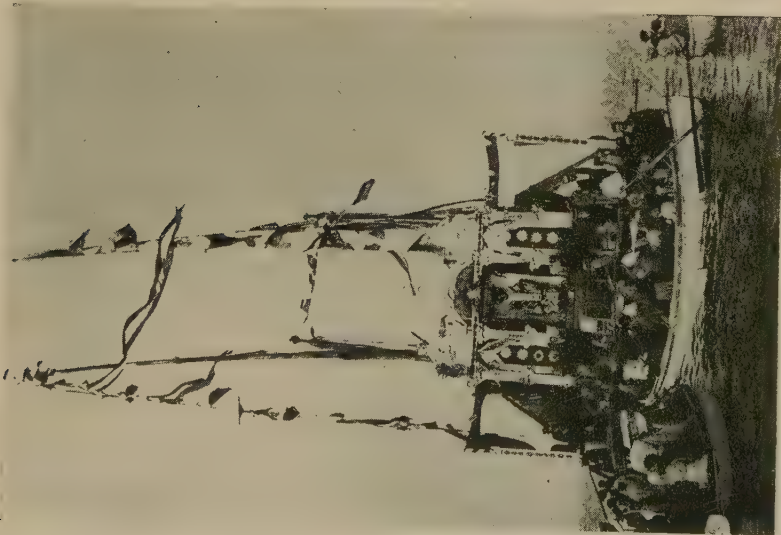
The religious cult of Saint Nicholas as the patron of mariners has permeated the Eastern Church in particular. It was as the patron of children that he spread into the Western Church. In this character he became a unique figure in Western Europe. Gradually his religious character dropped away and he developed into a figure merely of kindly benevolence, a fairy-like benefactor, and with that change gradually worked a change in the name by which he became known in this rôle. Nicholas translated to the north became Nikolas, then Nikolaus, then by intimacy Kolaus, and finally Klaus and Claus. Meantime the San or Santo, by an unexplained process, became feminized into Santa. So he is known to the English-speaking world as Santa Klaus, or Claus, bereft of miter and crozier and vestments, a jolly, corpulent old gentleman who drives his reindeer across the housetops in the dark hours before Christmas dawn, still working miracles of prescience as to what each child asleep below would like to have in his stocking and in supplying it from his marvelous inexhaustible pack.



In Italy, and especially here at Bari, Saint Nicholas has never lost his religious and saintly character. He has nothing whatever to do with Christmas which remains here simply a religious feast commemorating Christ's nativity. The day of the year that focuses the devotion to Saint Nicholas is not even December sixth, the possible date of his death and his name day in the ecclesiastical calendar. Instead, the anniversary of the day when he was brought to Bari, seven hundred and sixty-one years after his death, on May 7, 1087, is celebrated.

Bari is not among the Italian cities sought by tourists. It may even come as a bit of a surprise that it is, after Naples, the largest city in the southern half of the Italian peninsula and the largest port in the Adriatic south of Venice. It is surprising, too, on coming into it, to find Bari flat as the sea beside which it stands, and laid out with the mathematical regularity of a chess-board.

What have these miles of straight streets, tram and motor traffic, modern buildings and profuse electrification to do with Saint Nicholas? Frankly nothing. Extending into the sea, however, is a small hook of land, not many acres in extent, which seems to reach out into the calm waters as if shrinking from the noisy, commonplace, newly-rich city of which it is so much a thing apart. This is the old city, with its medieval castle and some walls remaining, and here are centered all the souvenirs of Saint Nicholas.



Processional Barge Bringing Saint Nicholas to Bari



The Land Procession of Saint Nicholas at Bari



Bari

The Processional Statue of Saint Nicholas, beloved of children as Santa Claus, and patron of pawnbrokers whose three balls he carries on the book in his arm



*Photo by Brogi*

Saint Nicholas (by Moretto) patron to children to whom he is sometimes known as Santa Claus

One crosses the broad, straight, modern Corso and burrows in between modern business buildings to arrive in the old city magically as if in another world. It is a labyrinth of narrow shadowy ways, curving in every direction between old houses nodding to each other and kept from falling into each other's embrace only by buttresses and arches. Nowhere does one see a hundred yards ahead. Every one works or rests at his door: shoemakers, tailors, cooks, babies, and most conspicuous of all, the dear old ladies of Bari. This old town must be a healthful place, though it looks anything but that, for surely nowhere else in an equal space are there so many old women, so well preserved or so fat. Many of them were handsome, too, and any one of them when addressed was quick to answer civilly, and if the way was asked, to rise and lead you there. One such, knitting all the way and talking in a friendly staccato in what must have been Baresi dialect, for there was little enough Italian about it, led me a short route, that was a cat's-tail chase for sharp curves, to the very core of the old town where stands the Cathedral.

The massive pile dates from the thirteenth century when masons were poets and wrote odes and sonnets with their chisels. When I saw this church it showed me only windows, and windows only remain its memory. Here are no tall Gothic windows ranged uniformly along the apse, no round-topped



Romans, part of a seriesed pattern. There are not even many of them, but, such as exist, are so refreshingly naive in their placements on the seemingly unbroken wall spaces, each with its own personality—for its particular lacy frame, or its sculptured remarks in beasts and men and angels, or for quaint ornate vizors as over the great roses whose very outlines are delicately molded into new forms—that they seem to be not windows at all but mere poetic traceries with no other purpose than to charm the eye.

The vast interior was given over entirely to the scaffolding and litter of restoration. The original baptistry, now incorporated with the main church as its sacristy, is interesting, but if the sun comes out while you are there you will find it brings with it the colors of much garish modern decoration, which does not bode well for what may happen under the newly decorated dome. I took refuge in the crypt, hoping to see another of those strange old Madonnas which are unblushingly ascribed to Saint Luke, and which, I was told, might be seen there. But a devout assembly was attending a priest at mass at the altar, and the reverent quiet discouraged snooking.

Another twist and turn or two beyond the Cathedral brings one to the only considerable opening in the old city, and it is, of course, seized upon to be distinguished as a piazza. But it is more interesting for its marble column and for the marble lion of St.

Mark's at its foot. The lion's collar bears the inscription "Custos justitiæ," but its back glows with the patina of centuries of caresses, for the lion is one of the expressions of Bari's gratitude to Venice for sending a fleet under the Doge Pietro Orseolo to relieve it, in 1002, from the terror of the besieging Saracens.

Another expression of that same gratitude is the procession on Saint Mark's day to the fortress overlooking the northern waters. Thence a cannon is fired three times in salute to Venice. There is believed to be augury for the ensuing year in the distance the balls travel, and the people watch them eagerly, for the farther they go the more auspicious it is believed the future will be.

No place is far on this tiny snub of a peninsula which supports old Bari, but no place is obvious in the maze of passageways, so, though seeking it, we came with suddenness and surprise on the Church of San Nicola, which stands apart, austere and secluded on one side of the town just next to the sea, which, however, washes the base of nearly every building here. In spite of its name one can think of this church only as the last home of Santa Claus, and so circle it round and round as the memory-chest of childhood's Christmas delight. It is, however, more than a great sentiment; it is one of Italy's great edifices.

At first the church seemed austere and dour like a fortress church, but gradually this gave way to its few but notable details. Its bricks have been laid with many expertly lined arches which break the flat surfaces in monotone traceries of delicately shaded effects. The windows are few and small, but generally mated with their two small individual arches gathered under a single larger arch, without decoration. The carved doorways are the ornate and notable features of the exterior, and of the five, each distinctive in character, that on the south side, the door of the Lions by Mastro Basilio, is not only the most interesting in its carvings, but it sits majestically back eight feet under an arched opening in the wall some thirty feet high. It has its name from the splendid beasts whose backs support the marble columns which frame the opening.

Having propitiated the lions, with the admiration which they and their door exact, I entered. It, too, is a church of few windows, and those so small, that at first the subdued light is scarcely sufficient to unravel a bewildering array of arches, of all sizes, in all directions, everywhere. Angular without, it is all curves within. The nave reveals itself divided into three aisles by comparatively short columns which support arches sprayed in three directions. The broad central aisle is made high by the flanking colonnades of an uninterrupted succession of arches

behind which are the women's galleries. The nave is transversely divided by three massive arches under which one sees the sanctuary through a triple arched screen which divides the nave from the apse. It is the succession of enormous transverse arches dividing the nave which is so unconventional and at first inexplicable. Gradually the lines of the intricate interior come out of the shadows and one sees that expediency has repeated in the nave of San Nicola a feature of the streets outside. Like the nodding old houses which the arches keep from falling into each other's arms or into the street, so the flanks of this old church's nave are not quite perpendicular and these transverse arches at such frequent intervals are seen to have been an expedient afterthought to keep the walls apart.

The nave and its aisles are unadorned by any other coloring than that of the graceful masonry, except above where the little windows of the clear-story light a flat, seventeenth-century, baroque ceiling. Otherwise all the flamboyancy is reserved to the sanctuary, whose round end is a gallery of paneled paintings, sacred and profane, and, no matter how old, too young and garish. The gem of the upper church is, however, the beautiful high altar under its Byzantine tabernacle of two octagons supported by colonnades of forty-eight columns. It is made even more beautiful by the sculpture and paintings,



covering the shallow apse behind this treasure, but they seem less beautiful than they really are in its presence.

This church has witnessed stirring scenes. Before it was entirely finished, in 1094, Peter the Hermit preached here the First Crusade, a popular theme to Baresi ears, for their city for centuries had suffered from the assaults of the Saracens. In 1098, Pope Urban II sat here with one hundred and eighty-five bishops, besides other high ecclesiastics, in a great Council to attempt to settle the differences between the Greek and Roman Churches. During the long period when southern Italy was a part of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, this church was the crowning place of its sovereigns. Roger II, son of the "Great Count," was crowned here in 1131. Later it witnessed the double coronation of Emperor Henry VI, the first of the Hohenstaufen line to rule in the South, and his wife, the Empress Constance, aunt of Tancred, in whose right the son of Frederick Barbarossa claimed the Sicilian throne. In 1258, Manfred, romantic and luckless, here received the Sicilian crown. In our own times Princess Helena of Montenegro, before her marriage to the present King Victor Emanuel II of Italy, in this church publicly and ceremoniously transferred her allegiance from the Greek to the Roman Church.

These are the traditions of the upper church. One

feels near Saint Nicholas himself, however, only in the crypt below. It is a large chamber whose vaulted roof, stuccoed in baroque, is supported by twenty-eight columns each of whose capitals is different from every other. The altar here is entirely covered over with silver in high relief. The ceiling drips lamps like a forest of silver stalactites. Ex-voto are everywhere represented in silver gratitude to the saint for cures of various members of the human anatomy and for saving his devotees from numberless forms of chastisement and death. The subdued yellow flames of scores of candles light the foreground and throw the corners into mystic shadows. The effect is Byzantine, and properly so, for so too was the benevolent saint interred beneath the altar.

Seamen from Bari took the body of Saint Nicholas, in 1087, from the Cathedral of Myra, and brought it here, and thus the church which bears his name was begun at once. Ever since it has been the center of his cult, with rank among the great shrines of Christendom.

It is traditional that from the moment of his death and continuously since, the saint's remains have exuded an oil, called the "Manna of Saint Nicholas," and endowed with miraculous powers. As recited by Voragine: "And when he was buried in a tomb of marble, a fountain of oil sprang out from his head unto his feet; and unto this day holy oil issueth out of

his body, which is much available to the health of sicknesses of many men. . . . Long time after this the Turks destroyed the city of Myra, and then came thither forty-seven knights of Bari, and four monks showed them the sepulcher of Saint Nicholas, and they opened it and found the bones swimming in the oil, and they bare them away honorably into the city of Bari in the year of our Lord ten hundred and eighty-seven."

Leaving Saint Nicholas and his splendid temple, and weaving through the twisting shadowy streets another two minutes, I was suddenly, as suddenly as I had entered, out in the sun again, in wide open streets and squares, in tangled noisy traffic, hurdled over the centuries back to to-day; back into a present as real as Santa Claus is unreal, out of a past seemingly as unreal as Saint Nicholas was real.

To get all that Bari has to offer one should arrive, even as its patron did, in the earliest days of May. Then the roads are companionable with pilgrims journeying hither from many parts of the world and particularly from other parts of southern Italy. There are water pilgrims as well as land pilgrims. They sail down from Ancona and Rimini and up from Brindisi and the heel. But no other district sends so many as that on the opposite shore of the Adriatic, whence they come under their own lateens from the rock-bound coast of Albania or, farther, from Patras

and Corfu. The Eastern Church is none the less devoted to its favorite saint because his bones are now in Western hands.

The pilgrims begin to arrive the fourth day before the feast. But the city already is decorated, floral arches span the Corso, flags and bunting appear everywhere, and a carnival spirit settles over the city; more properly over the new city. The old city, in whose heart the shrine is hidden, preserves a sober demeanor, and here the fundamental religious character of the festival is in evidence.

For the most part the pilgrims are very poor. They often sleep all night in the churches, doorways, under arches, or even on the pavements. Many bring their own bread and wine and cheese and some of these eat little else while in Bari. The priory of San Nicola alone has on these occasions fed, in one day and free, between nine and ten thousand of the very poor.

In approaching the church of San Nicola these visitors don the pilgrim habit and carry long staves decorated with palm and olive branches and the pilgrim's gourd. One of their principal acts of devotion is to make the circuit of the exterior of the huge church on their knees, from time to time inclining their forehead to the pavement and pressing their lips to its stones. Day after day they stand, in long queues inside the church, under the arches of the nave, awaiting their opportunity to descend into the crypt,



pray at the shrine, leave a votive taper, and receive from the priests the little bottles containing a precious particle of the "Manna of Saint Nicholas" dissolved in water.

On the fifth day, that is to say on the eighth of May, the pilgrimage culminates in the land and water processions. The sailors and fishermen go to the church and, from the clergy, receive as their special prerogative a wooden effigy of the saint. This is placed on a large portable platform, and is decorated with rich episcopal vestments, flowers and candles, and the stronger men struggle for the privilege of bearing it on their shoulders. He is a splendid and benignant figure as he rides thus through the city over the heads of the multitude between banks of crowded windows and balconies and rooftops. But in this manifestation he seems less obviously to be the patron of children, or of unmarried girls, or of seamen, than the patron of pawnbrokers, for the most conspicuous accessory of his get-up are their three golden balls which he carries in his left arm.

The procession is made long with regional groups of pilgrims, sodalities and other associations, and bands of music; and there is always floated through the city on painted canvas waves, which indifferently conceal the wheels and beasts beneath, a life-size reproduction of the ship which brought the saint to Bari nearly a thousand years ago.

While the procession is in progress, bombs are exploded, cannon are fired, the bells ring gaily, poems in honor of Saint Nicholas and flowers and confetti are flung into the air as he approaches, while the crowds hail him with: “*Viva San Nicola! Viva San Nicola!*”

Those in the procession itself maintain a more sober demeanor. Candle in hand, they either recite the rosary or chant litanies of the Saint's achievements, of which one of the most popular has been thus translated:

“The sick are given health  
 By the miraculous oil,  
 They who are in danger of shipwreck  
 Are delivered by Saint Nicholas,  
 He raised a dead man to life by the wayside,  
 A Jew was baptized on the miraculous recovery  
 of his money,  
 A vase lost in the sea  
 And a child lost also  
 He recovered.  
 Oh how great a saint did he appear  
 When he gave cover in a famine!  
 Sing, therefore, hymns in praise of Nicholas,  
 For all who pray to him  
 With earnest hearts  
 Will be cured of their vices. Amen.”

In the course of the procession the saint is carried on a visit of state to the Cathedral and then he is taken to the old harbor where he is mounted on a decorated

fishing boat and, as the wind is caught in the big brown sails, carried out to sea. He is escorted by a numerous but informal flotilla of small boats, filled with fishermen and their families, who follow their patron to beg his intercession for fair winds and full nets during the ensuing year. One by one these boats turn back and the great lateen above the saint's statue disappears alone down the horizon.

At night the city is a blaze of illumination. Fireworks light up the sky. Every one who can finds a place along the margins of the old harbor, for at this time the sailors bring their patron in again, a return which is symbolic of his first arrival here from Myra; and he is borne in state back to his great church there to await the coming of another May, other pilgrim bands and the festive repetition of the processions in which he participates with his calm wide eyes expressing a kind of patient reluctant wonder.

## CHAPTER VI

### A CITY OF FASCINATING DISAPPOINTMENTS

DELUSIONS OF FOGGIA—THE BLONDE CITY IN HER  
GREEN SHEEP PASTURES—SUBTERRANEAN WHEAT  
PITS—SUPERSTITION OF SEPARATING THE TWIN CARA-  
BINIERI—PADRE PIO OF THE STIGMATA—HUMAN  
WEATHER VANES—HUNTING FOR THE FIFTH GOSPEL—  
MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF A FUNCTIONARY—  
DINO THE FACHINO

WHY do travelers come to Foggia? As a matter of fact, not many do, in spite of the importance of the railway station on the northern outskirts of the little city. Here two of the main arteries of Italian railway travel meet and cross and drill on with little thought of Foggia herself. There is the long line of metals which comes down from Venice by way of Ravenna, Rimini and Ancona, and passes on to Taranto and the sole. There is the other longer line which brings the English and French through Genoa, Rome and Naples, across the peninsula and on to Bari and Brindisi, their last stepping-off place on to steamers for the Levant and the Orient.



Few travelers pay much attention to Foggia, tourists least of all. No one seems to alight here except the slender run of those who have a private ax to grind in the way of a sale to make, or an order to take, or a debt to collect, or a political job to poultice.

I had my errands there, or thought I had, but apart from them the very name of the town had created a definite entity of expectation. Some names do that. Each of them exudes its own atmosphere. London is sound and splendid without brilliancy or ostentation. Paris comes off the lips with lightness and delicacy. Rome rolls serenely over the tongue, the aristocrat of all names, the imperial idea translated definitely into a single full-throated tone.

Foggia, too, mouths richly. It is opulent yet pretty, luxurious without being too heavy, luscious, dark, colorful, like some lovely brunette beauty of goodly proportions. Foggia hinted shadowy streets, palaces with soft brown textures, deep windows, heavy archways letting into mysterious courts and stone stairways winding into dark towers. Foggia promised me flowers in her hair, fruit in her lips, jewels in her ears, rings on her fingers. Deep in the reservoirs of hope was an expectation of finding Foggia seductive and alluring, perhaps irresistible.

Doubtless I should have known better, for not once had I mentioned Foggia to an Italian that he did not wrinkle his nose and sniff in a way that carried

anything but a compliment. That preconceived idea of her was sheer self-delusion.

A more unimpressive city of over eighty thousand human units, or many under, doesn't exist in Italy. Foggia is a heavy blonde, a washed-out and faded blonde, an un-Italian matron without flowers or rings or jewels, without even olives in her cheeks, or the least come-hither in her glances; stark and drab, and seeming to care very little who knows it.

She sits flat and white in the center of the northernmost of the three chess-boards of the province of Apulia. About her stretches a fertile treeless plain crossed by half a dozen rivers bearing water from the Apennines to the Adriatic. Westward these mountains wall their gray summits against the setting sun and eastward the shadowy heights of Monte Calvo indicate the beginning of the jutting promontory of Gargano, reaching out into the sea, the spur on the boot of Italy.

This plain has interest even if the city has not. Ever since the Roman period it has been the great sheep pasture of Italy. At the close of the sixteenth century it supported four and a half million sheep. At the beginning of summer the shepherds have for centuries led their flocks up into the Apennines. Three broad routes have been set aside by the state and kept in grass for the annual migration. The sheep graze in the mountains through the hot months

and return by these three grazing routes, the Tratturi delle Pecore, to the plain for the winter. Agriculture has broken up so much of the grazing ground that now the sheep here number less than half a million.

Any of these seemed hard to find. I had watched for them in vain when on one occasion I noticed a field scattered over with what appeared to be large gray boulders. But, as we approached, the timid rocks raised their heads and bleated and ran, and they were white sheep. So, encouraged by the actual presence of sheep, when farther along I saw a line of low black lumps, I thought them some of the black sheep such as one sees about Taranto. As we approached, these, too, raised their heads and gazed at us; but they neither bleated nor ran, for they were black-skirted women and black pantalooned men tilling and trimming the furrows.

Foggia actually starts off well enough with a straight modern street leading from the station to the city, but it soon abandons the idea, apparently from artistic motives, as if it felt a curve would lend grace to the way—and so it does. But once the straight line is abandoned, Foggia is not able to regain it. The streets swing about in arcs between the always low and unimpressive houses, turning on themselves and delivering you back unexpectedly to the point of departure as if to surprise you, and they do. It is an unexciting town in which to ramble. All is white and

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reasonably clean, but drearily commonplace. Nothing seems quite new, and nothing seems quite old, except the slender Cathedral, whose façade, rising behind its broad dais of thirteen diminishing semicircular steps, is surely a contribution to the beauties of Italy. Two cornices which trisect it are its most ornate and interesting feature. The lower cornice is especially engaging, crowded as it is with grotesque figures, among them one I thought quite without duplication anywhere—a lion walking upside down and not in the least disturbed by his position. The waggeries of the medieval sculptors and masons are surely worth compiling.

The most, and perhaps the only, distinctive feature about Foggia is the Piazza delle Fosse, which the Latins called *Foveæ*, a word from which the city's name is supposed to derive. This long open space on the north side of town is without trees or grass or any green growth. It is made curious and unique, however, by being dotted all over with stone markers about two feet high, which give the piazza somewhat the aspect of a neglected cemetery. Since no care is lavished here, and the place is neither proper nor picturesque one asks himself in vain what the stones stand for. Then a friendly Foggian—for the uninviting town is full of hospitable people—explains that each stone marks the opening of a subterranean magazine in which wheat is stored, later to be



distributed over Italy, especially in Naples, where it is made over into macaroni. There is a similar sub-soil treasury for grain in one of the great open spaces of Valetta, the capital of the island of Malta, but there the square is handsomely paved and the openings are mathematically regular and are marked by low domes which give an effect as pleasing as it is unique.

If I had expected much of Foggia before coming, this expectation was accented by an incident at the moment of arrival.

Every one who has been in Italy has remarked how the little Italian police, the carabinieri, distinguished by their cocked hats and long cloaks, never appear except in pairs. To the stranger they seem inseparable. So, indeed, the Italians themselves find them, and there is a superstition that good luck will attend you if you pass between two carabinieri. When an Italian succeeds in that, he goes at once and buys a lottery ticket, or bets on a horse, or renews siege on the heart of his innamorata. As I was leaving the railway station, two carabinieri separated politely and let me pass between, so I came into Foggia in a fine fettle, full of confident expectation.

But in spite of the fine sound of its name, it was all anticipation, and with scarcely any realization; the superstition of the divided carabinieri did not work. Nevertheless, Foggia had promised other and more

compensating souvenirs. I actually stopped there as a point of departure on two errands: one in one direction to find a certain famous Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, and a second in another direction to see the manuscript of the recently discovered fifth Gospel, according to St. Joseph, in the adjacent city of Cerignola.

Padre Pio is a Minor Franciscan friar of the tiny mountain monastery of San Giovanni Rotondo, eastward from Foggia some twenty-five miles, on the slopes of Monte Calvo. For some years he has been the center of a growing cult of crowds from all parts of Italy and some visitors from nearly every part of Christendom, who come to him to secure miraculous manifestations and favors through his intervention. Padre Pio, in a word, is looked upon as a miracle-working saint, whose devotees have found him more alluring because he needed not to be visualized by a sculptured effigy in a niche, but was alive and personally and readily accessible. His especial distinction is in the belief that he bears, like Francis of Assisi, the stigmata, or the five wounds of Christ, in his two hands, his breast and in his two feet.

Photographs and medals bearing his portrait have attained wide circulation. Anything or any scrap of anything that he had worn or touched has been coveted, sought and accounted efficacious in making cures. Articles and books have been written about his

life. Scientists have been sent to San Giovanni to examine him and, though they approached as sceptics, they declared they had been disarmed by Padre Pio's gentle, cheerful, normal manner and by the character of the marks on his body.

None of the many doctors who examined the wounds has explained them. One of these doctors, Romanelli of Barletta, who visited the monk five times in two years, made a report to the Vatican in which he declared that the lesions were covered by a thin membrane of a reddish-brown tint, that there was neither local bleeding nor inflammation in the surrounding tissues, that the blood was arterial blood. Festa, a Roman physician, declared the wounds were not superficial, found blood oozing from them in considerable quantities, and though he came believing Padre Pio suffering from a form of hysteria he left him eased of that idea. These two men united in an examination and a report in which they said that the lesions are anatomical, and can be explained only as veritable stigmata.

The tangible and certain fact of so many people coming from so many distant places to see Padre Pio confirmed the peasants in their own belief in his saintly and miraculous character. When, therefore, early in 1926, the rumor reached Pietrelcina that the Vatican, which had never given countenance to the reports about their idol, had directed his removal to

another part of Italy, the peasants surrounded the monastery of San Giovanni sworn to defend Padre Pio and, if necessary, to prevent his removal with their lives. Whatever the basis of the rumor which produced this popular manifestation, Padre Pio remained in the little monastery on the mountain.

The Vatican, as a matter of fact, holding discretion, as usual, ahead of either enthusiasm or resentment, bided its time. In spite of an evident disapproval of the easy credulity of the devout believers in Padre Pio, there was no violence of official denial. The policy adopted was to discourage the disapproved practises by merely declaring that the divine or miraculous character of the monk was “not proved.” When this mild attitude failed of the desired effect, the Vatican then issued an edict forbidding Catholics to write, read, sell, distribute, or in any way promote publicity about him, and forbade visits to him or communication with him.

This was the information I had gathered on my way to Foggia. This was the basis of my curiosity to see a saint in the flesh marked with the unexplained stigmata. Great was my surprise, and greater my disappointment, therefore, to discover that, only a short time before, Padre Pio had, obviously by direction from the Vatican, mysteriously departed from San Giovanni and was believed to be in another monastery of his order in a distant part of Italy.



San Giovanni, emptied of its interesting monk, and as the center merely of the surprised and doubtless angered peasantry, seemed not quite worth a visit. I felt cheated, and it was then that I began to doubt the pleasant superstition of the good luck attending one who divides the strolling carabinieri. Thereupon my interest turned toward Cerignola and the newly discovered addition to the New Testament.

A few weeks before, while in Taranto, I had read in an American newspaper, under the promising head-line "Italian Claims Gospel Antedating Evangelists," the following cabled dispatch:

"Foggia, Italy, Jan. 16 (By A. P.).—Signor Luigi Moccia, of Cerignola, claims that he possesses thirty-one Greek parchments containing the oldest text of the Gospel written in ancient Greek by Joseph of Jerusalem, a disciple of Christ, as he calls himself, in a kind of preface to 'The Life of Jesus Christ.'

"The last sheet is a farewell letter written by Joseph, then on the point of death, addressed to his 'Brethren in the Faith,' when Jerusalem was destroyed by Vespasian, Roman emperor, about the year 70 of the Christian era.

"Signor Moccia, who has partly translated the gospel, declares the work constitutes the principal source from which were derived the four Evangelists. If this is true, the document is of the highest importance, as it might throw fresh light on the origin of Christianity."

The moment seemed to have arrived to make this little side journey to the discoverer of the fifth Gospel

and to see his great treasure. The moment may have arrived, but not the weather. It's no good motoring about in a torrent of rain, and for two days in Foggia no one apparently opened his mouth except in despair: "*Che tempo brutto!*" (What ugly weather, indeed.)

The reiteration of the phrase reminded me of how esthetically the Italian takes his weather. He is right. Here the aspect of nearly everything requires sunshine, except, perhaps, Paestum and San Gimignano, for there is a somber tragic note about both which is better served when the sun does not shine. Weather seems to be less a matter of crops or comfort than of pleasing aspects. Other peoples say that weather is "good" or "delightful," or on the other hand "bad" or "disagreeable," reflecting the influence on personal comfort. The Italian, however, speaks of the weather not as good or bad, but only as beautiful or ugly: *Bel tempo, tempo brutto*. His consideration is for its decorative effect, its influence on his house, his garden, his hillside and his sea. He will endure any temperature if only the sun shine.

The third day of my stay at Foggia dawned overcast, still without sunshine, still with an occasional spray of rain. Nevertheless I was not surprised to have the motor appear in spite of it, and when I saw it I knew the clouds would soon roll away, that there was a bright day ahead. The Italians are not only

dependent on sunshine, they are human barometers for sensing its departure and its return. If the rest of the world would know whether to carry an umbrella or not, it depends on the state of the sky, or the weather reports; and some of us can remember taking our umbrellas or leaving them according to the ins and outs of the little old lady and little old gentleman at the twin doors of the little tin house on the library mantelpiece. If one or the other was out—who can remember which?—it was a case of rain or shine. But no such cumbersome barometer slips into the luggage of the modern traveler. I have never seen even an Englishman carry one away from home, and what an Englishman does not carry in his containers, and in his container of containers, is not carried.

In Italy there is, in fact, a far simpler means of forecasting the weather. Watch the Italians. Look out of your window especially for the dignified, middle-aged, always-in-black men on their leisurely way to their mysterious day's doings. You may wonder whither they go, and what for, but do not fail to pay them the compliment of imitation. If they carry an umbrella, then though the sun were blazing from a cloudless sky, so would I. If they leave their overcoats at home, or wear them, accordingly so would I. Even though the heavens held every promise of a deluge, if these weather-seers swing their walking

sticks, then so would I. An Italian knows his climate with uncanny prescience. Other nationals of mature experience know their climates, too, but they haven't as much climate to know as he. It is a hand-to-mouth, an hour-to-hour, a here-to-day-and-gone-to-morrow climate with an eternal Aprilness of inconstancy; at its worst never more disagreeable than the worst one encounters elsewhere, and at its best it makes of Italy a Paradise.

Sure enough, we were no sooner under way, and the last of Foggia behind us, than the sun came out and spread its glory over the clean washed air and the fresh green countryside. The motor sang like a young giant conscious of its power, glad to be alive. So were we.

Cerignola is twenty-five miles southeast of Foggia on a slight rise in the plain, which elsewhere is as flat as the Adriatic's floor—which doubtless at one time it was. Half-way to it, the city came over the horizon, at first a single point of light where the sun tipped the metal cross on the Cathedral dome; then the tiara-like dome itself; and at length the Cathedral, pedestaled as if upon the long white base of the city's low flat sky-line. At times the dome, or even the city itself, disappeared below a rising tide of emerald, when almond or olive orchards came between, or fields of squat elms were drawn into unbroken green lines by garlands of grape-vines.



The little city of Cerignola is in all parts new, though old at its foundations. Above ground there is a single evidence of its age, a stone in its principal street, recalling that on the road which Trajan made from Beneventum to Brindisium this was the eighty-first marker from the latter place.

It is indeed the first step that counts. In my hunt for Signor Moccia my first step was the undoing of my errand. Unfortunately I explained too fully whom I wished to see and why. Who would have guessed that it was an error to refer to an interest in his remarkable manuscript that promised to attract to him, and to Cerignola, too, the attention of the whole world?

No one appeared to know where the celebrated man could be found. I was given a dozen clues which only led to where he wasn't. Even when, later, I suppressed any mention of his great discovery and asked only for Signor Moccia himself, the result was no different; word had spread about the town that a foreigner had come about the business of the gospel manuscript, and ignorance of Moccia's whereabouts spread with it.

Somehow I learned that he was a clerk in the Palazzo Municipale (for Municipal Palace is the Italian name of no matter how humble a town hall). When I reached his office it was empty, but a hat hung on the wall behind his desk. Immediately, a

man entered from an adjoining room. When he saw me and heard my inquiry for Signor Moccia, he at once told me that he was out. This was unbelievable under the Fascist régime. In the old days, perhaps; for then every government functionary had at least two hats, and one of them he left hanging always conspicuously in his office. No matter how he might be playing hooky in office hours, no matter in what other part of town he might be, or in what café or boudoir, there near his desk hung one of his hats, and some one was all ready to say for him, "There is his hat; he must be in the building somewhere." Mussolini knew this dodge, and as soon as he headed the government, one of his first orders directed that government employees might not have more than one hat!

Later I suspected the identity of the wretch who coolly looked me in the eye across that desk and told me Moccia was out.

At any rate a veil of mystery completely enveloped the man and his manuscript. No one could find the former, and no one knew anything whatever of his discovery. The only explanation of the enigma seemed to be that the Foggia cablegram had been the free imagining of a journalist who found the actualities of his zone too prosaic and unprofitable, and decided to depend on the remoteness and insignificance of the place of origin to protect him from

inquiry from oversea. A part of every day during the next fortnight I spent mentally preparing a broadside exposing the perfidy of this conscienceless correspondent.

After this disappointment I was all but convinced that it was an empty superstition that any luck attended walking between carabinieri. Ten days later I was absolutely convinced of it when, in a New York newspaper, under the head-line "New Gospel Flivers As Hoax to Bait Ford," I read this cablegram from Rome :

"The suddenly famous 'Fifth Gospel, according to Joseph,' it now appears, might be more appropriately called 'Ford's First Gospel,' for police investigation indicates most strongly that its 'discovery' and proclamation was for the purpose of getting money from Henry Ford, American automobile manufacturer, for the mysterious parchment.

"A certain Gardella, neighbor of Municipal Clerk Moccia of Cerignola, says that he himself gave Moccia the idea of proclaiming the discovery of the Gospel, the original purpose being to tease the Vatican and push an unsuccessful historical novel . . ."

Obviously the jig was up already, even before I reached Cerignola. Town pride, clannishness, fidelity to a friend in disgrace, some shred of sentiment kept those Cerignolians from exposing their fellow citizen to further publicity. It was then that I suspected that, though I had missed seeing the manu-

script, I had looked upon the ambitious hoaxer when, in his own office, I had been told so suavely that he was out.

On the whole I was glad to leave Foggia, but I was sorry to leave Dino. I first met Dino when he came to my door my first night at the Albergo delle Centigramme. That was not the name over the door. The real name of the hotel was soon forgotten, but it is easy to remember it as the Centigram Hotel because of Dino's strange way of taking my breakfast order. It was his formula for saying good night. "How many centigrams of bread will the signor have? . . . How many centigrams of butter? . . . How many centigrams of milk? . . . *Buon' riposo.*" It was not without novelty to be called upon to order breakfast by weight, much less on the metric system.

Dino was not attached to the hotel; on the contrary, the hotel seemed attached to him, one of the many strings with which he angled for a living. Dino was a *fachino*, a porter, a runner of errands, a man of all work, a handy Andy, a doer of anything or everything.

Dino's name descended from Bernardo, but in a perfectly understood Italian way. If Bernardo is liked, the last part of his name is added to, and he is addressed as Bernardino. If Bernardino is liked very much, the first part of his name is chopped off and



he is called Dino. This particular Dino was a great favorite, and those who knew him knew why.

Dino must have been eighty years old if he was a day. Somewhere behind a mass of white whiskers was a face and surely a smile; but, though the smile of the lips never quite penetrated the brush, it twinkled in two beady eyes which were worn by long hard service into a squint, a hazel-brown squint of autumn sunshine.

Dino had a body, too. Like his name, however, it was the ultimate diminutive. Somewhere in the floppy pantaloons, in the flannel shirt, and the vest big enough for three such men, and in a coat which was half a cloak, there was concealed a body, but it concealed its shape as well as it did itself, except that there could not have been much of it in such a superfluity of looseness and wrappings and foldings. What there was of it went rather to a hump behind his shoulders which pushed his head forward so that when he turned up his face he could not throw back his head, but turned it sidewise; and this would have been pathetic were it not for his friendly whiskers and his merry little eyes which gave an eeriness to his whole rag-bag of a person.

Though Dino appeared to belong to no one in particular, he was always available. Any appeal for aid to Giovanna—a brawny shrew, with a black mustache and the shoulders of a wrestler, who con-

trolled the corridors and chambers of the modest hotel—brought always the same answer. And it was Dino.

Dino would do anything. He would trot off to the tobacco shop for a postage-stamp or a carton of cigarettes, he would do a whole route of kiosks to find a particular newspaper, he knew just where to get the matches that would light when struck, he knew who would be free at the moment to press a suit of clothes, and he knew where to find a conveyance when none was in sight. Moreover, he had a kind of unofficial connection with the post-office which permitted him to call for letters and to get them even during the sacred midday hours of siesta. I think he could, in a pinch, even have managed a money order on credit. And when he returned and presented himself, hat in one hand, he would plunge the other hand into some mysterious opening in his rags, and shake them, and like a magician produce the very thing he had been sent for.

He did not move fast, but he kept moving, and so he was an example of what perseverance in small things can accomplish. All weathers were one to Dino. He walked through the rain with the same apparent indifference that he showed to sunshine. It was all in the day's work. To Dino, however, a day's work was as strange an assortment of details as ever were rummaged together. I once saw him beating

his way across the piazza with a huge gilt chair upside down on his head, and the very next time with a mite of a baby in his arms, surely not his own. When, another time, I found him loading planks on a carpenter's cart, it would not have been any more surprising had he dismissed the donkey and walked off with the cart and lumber, too, balanced on his own head.

In odd moments when he took stock of his life he must have found it hard. Nature may have set his eyes into a twinkle that was unescapable like the tragic grin of the Man Who Laughed, but he made a brave show of translating it into willingness, promptness and cheerfulness. There was, in a word, nothing negative about this venerable old gentleman of all works. His acquaintance was a privilege, and his memory does much to ameliorate the purgatory of five days in Foggia.

## CHAPTER VII

### ROME, HAIL AND FAREWELL

APPROACHES TO THE ETERNAL CITY—SEEN AT MORNING FROM THE PINCIAN TERRACE—ROME'S HISTORIC ROOF-LINE—CHURCHES, PALACES AND MONUMENTS IN THE VISTA—SEEN AT EVENING FROM THE JANICULUM—ROME'S BACKGROUND OF MOUNTAINS—A CORAL CITY AT SUNSET—A TWILIGHT FAREWELL

ROME has no approach which suggests either its grandeur or its greatness. Trainways and motor roads bring one to it by equally uninteresting outskirts such as might be the sloughs and slums of any other large Italian city.

If one is alert of eye and lucky, such an experience may indeed be qualified by a glimpse of the dome of Saint Peter's, though the interest thereby stimulated is one of association of ideas, for nothing about it thus seen is in itself distinctive or impressive. Or one may, perhaps, snatch some brief outlook on the specter of the ancient aqueducts trailing in majestic arched fragments sometimes along the train's side, but immediately obscured by remnants of the old walls which



once surrounded Rome, themselves now blocked out by tenements, factories, barracks and much nondescript modern city.

Even when you reach the center of the city and approach your destination there seems to be nothing about this hectic hurrying motley, which is called traffic, or about the splendid but at first sight rather more than less conventional buildings to suggest the Rome of your dreams and expectations, the city of Cæsars and Pontiffs, the Eternal City. In proportion to its fame Rome is on first appearance—not on first acquaintance, for one does not know her so readily—probably the most disappointing city in the world.

There is, however, a way to discount such a disappointment. One may cheat this unfortunate circumstance of approach. One may first meet this great lady, this opulent splendid creature, as becomes her best. For this purpose come to her blindfolded. See nothing until she is prepared for you to see all. Steal in by night. Advantage yourself of the alluring mystery of darkness. Thus you can believe anything, and it will be not the object of your interest but the misfortune of circumstances which may disappoint. Cloister yourself until morning, and then go, but go very carefully, to greet great Rome. This is the way to see Rome first, and indeed a way to see Rome last, a hail and a farewell, a proper and memorable greeting and good-by.

Come in the morning to the terrace on the Pincian Hill. From this high balcony the greater portion of the city is spread like a carpet at your feet. At first glance it is a meaningless tangle of roofs drawn cubistically at all angles. The texture is warmed and varied and softened with patches of ecru and ocher walls, with weathered tiles of every tint of pink and green and brown and gray as if the roofs were padded with dead moss, with short perpendicular strokes of chimney-pots breathing almost imperceptible wisps of lazy smoke above the kitchen altars, with many hued festoons of wash drying on balconies and terraced housetops, with high but tiny arches letting in wall vistas or curves of azure stolen from the far low sky, and occasionally, withal, with somber cypresses reaching up from shadowy gardens.

It is not long before particulars appear, domes and towers, the tips of obelisks and columns, the cornices of medieval palaces, the faint tracery of streets and squares hinted by the patterned line of housetops, and even the course of the Tiber wreathing like a serpent among the low rises of the Seven Hills, everywhere souvenirs of unnumbered centuries. The great mistress seems modestly to say "Yours to command," knowing so well how she will absorb and conquer and herself command.

One looks down the declivity on treetops of light pines and dark cypresses, on ragged palms and the

tender green of deciduous trees. Motors move among the trees rising on the serpentine ramps. There is a foreshortened hint of the wall fountain and the sculptured figures which break the hemicycle and rise decoratively up the face of the hill. Below is the vast paved oval which is the Piazza del Popolo, dotted with human flies strolling in every direction, with motor-cars and carriages moving about like June-bugs and lines of other vehicles waiting like black caterpillars sunning. In the center, between four spouting lions, rises the obelisk which Augustus put in the Circus Maximus to commemorate his conquest of Egypt. At the right the moss-grown tiles of the rich church of Santa Maria del Popolo, which rises above the grave of Nero, obscure the Porto del Popolo, a modern gate where once the Flaminian Gate stood at the end of the Via Flaminia, the road which has brought to Rome for ages princes and pilgrims from northern Italy and all the northern world. Across the piazza, between and on either side of the twin-domed churches of Santa Maria de' Miracoli and Santa Maria in Monte Santo, three of the main arteries of the city stretch off like the ribs of a great fan.

This, however, is not what first fastens attention from the Pincian Hill. The inevitable will not wait on such details. The eye is instantly caught and held, as is the breath and the imagination, by the great dome across the whole city straight ahead, high

above every housetop, based not more on the basilica below it than it appears to be on the hills behind it, wholly silhouetted against the blue sky. No need to say, it is St. Peter's. Over there, in the colonnaded piazza before that capitol of papal Christendom, they may complain that Michael Angelo's plan for the setting of his dome was spoiled by others who built a too high façade before it, but what may not be seen in all its glory there, here may so be seen, full based, wholly expressed, the complete architectural tiara as conceived in its maker's mind.

Next to the right of St. Peter's is the vast yellow flank of the Vatican, now the palace of the popes and the repository of one of the greatest collections of sculpture, paintings and manuscripts in the world. Beyond it rises a green suggestion of the Vatican gardens. Palace and gardens, a detail in the landscape, are the extent of the domestic world of the self-imposed pontifical prisoner. Where the Vatican comes nearest St. Peter's it rises in a higher corner, and there are the private apartments of the pope.

Having seen what appears to be the jewel it is now easier for the eye to rove about and leisurely examine the setting. Other points, familiar as if seen before, rise out of the panorama in friendly greeting, and one is eager to grasp all, at once. But this first visit to Rome, made with a mere sweep of the eye, is better made in sequence, from right to left, that is



from north to south, from the vantage point on the northeastern edge of at least the older city.

The new Rome spreads out beyond the old in every direction, encompassing but never submerging it. But the old is still the old. Truly enough trimmer and cleaner than ever, but happily so much of it scarcely newer. The new embraces the old as if a younger generation embraced and protected its mother, object of its love and pride. The Pincian panorama commends itself not more because it compasses so much of the old than that it eliminates nearly all the new.

At the opposite hemicycle of the piazza, beyond the human flies and motor bugs, is Neptune's bowl emptying a cascade of liquid crystal. Behind it like a finger pointing straight at the Vatican is the Via Cola di Rienzi, and where the flanking balustrades are black with loungers you know the brown Tiber is slipping swiftly down to the sea, down to Ostia, the ancient city recently come to light to plague the former uniqueness of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

There is scarce need to name the high circular mass of masonry, pedestaling to heaven its great bronze trumpeting angel. Next to St. Peter's and the Colosseum it is the most familiar object in Rome. Already it is guessed that this is the Castle of Saint Angelo, once the mausoleum of Hadrian and other imperial dead, later a military stronghold of the

popes, and the prison of Benvenuto Cellini, whose life there and whose valor in its defense are remembered from his own not too modest pages. It is the very familiarity of the lines of this celebrated landmark that fastens it upon the attention, else it would be eclipsed by the white impertinence of the Palace of Justice, an ostentatious pile, vast and unduly conspicuous, needing the dust and rains of a thousand years to fit it more effectively into its environment. Nevertheless, it is as fine a new building as Rome boasts.

The tips of the twin domes of the two Santa Marias on the south side of the piazza bisect the distant hillsides of the Janiculum, green with parks and villas, along whose crest the city walls once stood dark against the sky. What, conspicuous there, is the meaningless tower which looks like a lighthouse strayed in from the coast? It is just that, the Faro Argentino, a sentimental souvenir, a beacon that has never seen the sea. Italians in the Argentine presented it to mother Rome, and at night it streaks the sky with the red and white and green of Italy's tri-color. A sharp eye will pick up near by the lofty bronze equestrian statue of Garibaldi, black against the blue; and farther on, the dark façade of San Pietro in Montorio, Saint Peter's of the Golden Hill, reminding that the Janiculum's yellow soil gave it its earlier name.

This little church has other memories in its keeping. It is built on the spot where, feet to the sky, St. Peter is supposed to have been crucified. Inside is buried, though without monument, the body of Beatrice Cenci, not so well remembered now as a parricide as by the doubted *Portrait of Beatrice Cenci* by Guido Reni, chief treasure of the Barberini Palace on the other side of the city.

From the mass that rises about and behind only faith and a practised Roman can pick out other details, save for the white façade which surely is the stupendous Fountain of Pope Paul V. Farther south the hill descends immediately into the low plain which is the pathway of the Tiber to the sea.

The many-tinted tapestry of domes and tiles which roofs the lower city breaks at one point a little nearer than the Palace of Justice to permit a vast, dark, low mushroom to emerge. It marks the tomb of Cæsar Augustus, one of the most sacred spots of ancient Rome, for there he and all the subsequent emperors, down to Nerva, were interred. In the Middle Ages it was, like Hadrian's tomb near by, a fortress. To-day it does a fairer service. It is called the Augusteo, and is Rome's chief temple of music.

The neighboring dome, graceful and high, marks the Church of San Carlo in Corso. In this ecclesiastical capital where each people has its church, this as long as Lombardy remained a nation was the national

church of the Lombards. To-day it is the most fashionable church in Rome. In the distance, fairly behind it, is another vast mushroom. It roofs the great temple which the ancient Romans dedicated to all their gods, the Pantheon. It has survived the ages intact. This temple is now a Christian church and here are buried the kings of Italy, in tombs of unrestrained decoration. In the midst of heaping red and brown and yellow and green and black marbles, delicately conspicuous and more engaging is a plain, small, white, marble box, absolutely unadorned except by the graceful distich of Bembo which thrills in saying that this is the tomb of Raphael.

To the Pantheon's left, and nearer, rises the roof-line of the Chamber of Deputies, Italy's house of Parliament. That is not a minaret beside it, but a small black figure on the tip of a dark round shaft. It is the priceless column of Marcus Aurelius rising ninety-five feet above the pavement, wrapped in twenty-three spirals of chiseled pictorial history. It stands in the Piazza Colonna just before the Chigi Palace, at present the core of Italian Government, for there Mussolini administers the affairs of state. Nothing else arrests the eye directed south, however, so inevitably as the bold white sculptured mass of the Monument of Victor Emmanuel II, modern Italy's tribute to itself. Where it rises is the Piazza Venezia at the southern end of the Corso Umberto, one of



Rome's chief arteries, whose northern end stalks into the Piazza del Popolo before us between the domes of the two churches of Santa Maria. There may be many minds about the other characteristics of this ambitious pile, but no one will deny that it is arresting. It dominates one end of the old city as St. Peter's does the other. But Michael Angelo's dome represents an idea which has permeated the world, and in its lines and tones it expresses the ultimate strength and beauty that man has put into this architectural medium.

The blinding white and glaring gilt of the Monument give it the note of *nouveau riche* in an environment of ageless aristocrats. Like the Palace of Justice it will seem more at home with the seasoning of a decade of centuries. And yet it has its functions. To the Italians it expresses the strength and power they hope to find in their fairly new national union. They worship it. Here they have buried their Unknown Soldier and honor him with a perpetual guard. With a gesture of affection and patriotism they call it the *Altare della Patria* (the Altar of the Fatherland).

To one who has climbed the hill screened by this vast marble fabric, it seems as if it hides so much more than it expresses that its intrusion might be regretted if it were ten times as impressive; for it cuts off from view the summit of the smallest though

sacreddest of the Seven Hills, which was Rome when none of the others was, the Capitoline. There six centuries before our era stood the heart of oldest Rome, on one side the citadel and on the other the Temple of Jupiter, and between them the Tabularium or depository of the ancient archives of state, all looking south into the vale in and about which clustered, and are seen or are traceable to-day, the Forum with its arches and temples and basilicas, the Colosseum, and the incredible Golden House of Nero.

The fan-top pines of the Villa Aldobrandini brush the sky high above Trajan's Forum, between the Monument and the bold hill of the Quirinal, which from here seems a continuation of the Pincian Hill. The Quirinal is marked by the vast ocher structure which takes its name from its site. It was built as a summer residence for the popes and here they lived until in 1870 when Pius IX retired into his voluntary prison next St. Peter's. Since then it has been used as the residence of the Italian kings, but the present king at least prefers the modest retirement of his Villa Ada beyond the city's eastern wall, and comes to the Quirinal only on state occasions.

This Pincian Hill, whose foreshortened green slopes frame the foreground toward the royal palace, is as the playground of the modern Roman, true to its ancient tradition of diversion, though a diversion of a richer, more erotic sort. Here were the gardens of

Lucullus, whose feasts have given his name to epicurean extravagance ever since. Here, too, were the palace and gardens of Messalina, that empress who added an extravagance of cruelty and terror to her orgies.

Withal the panorama holds hidden so much more than it reveals, for in sight, though here unrecognizable, is an unmatched array of venerable monuments and palaces, and of pagan temple remnants and Christian churches intact, and of souvenirs in one way or another of a sequence of celebrated characters that stretch back through the crowded ages even to Romulus and Remus at the nourishing breast of the wolf. In the limpid morning light it is the fairest greeting Rome can give.

But when the day comes for farewell, climb before sunset to the farther Janiculum, for those seductive hours when evening prepares to wrap the city in darkness. Climb by the easier gradient of the northern end, and on the hillside luxuriate in a neighborhood sacred to the poet Tasso. The way is by the steep Salita Sant' Onofrio. Near the top stands the church and monastery of that same saint. Here Tasso spent his last days. In a restful courtyard a fountain drips a cool poem under arched oaks. An open colonnade shelters frescoes by Domenichino. Inside the little monastery is shown the cell where Tasso died, other cells near by treasure tangible

souvenirs of the poet, and in the church one finds his tomb. Just beyond, on the hillside, is "Tasso's Oak," a venerable tree which lightning has done its best to shatter and science has done its best to save. Tasso came here and sat in its shade and looked down on Rome, and like as not, in passing, you will find lounging here a young Italian poet seeking inspiration at the same source.

Once on the crest of the Janiculum, you are on the highest of all the Seven Hills. From any point here Rome is more revealing than from any other outlook. This is Rome without reservation. Not only Rome but her vast setting. Everything seen in the morning, though reversed, is seen again. The *cuppolone* (the great dome), the modern Roman's dialectic name for his St. Peter's, hides itself a little behind the flanking trees, but the Castle of Saint Angelo raises its trumpeting angel nearer than ever to the sky. The Tiber, too, is more evident between its stone-paved banks, and nearly all its thirteen bridges may be distinguished, including, beyond the solitary island to the south, near the exquisite Temple of Fortune, the lone arch which is the surviving veteran of the Æmelian Bridge put there in 181 B. C. Just opposite by the riverside, most conspicuous of all the medieval houses built by the great Italian families, is the Farnese Palace, distinguishable by its high loggia and its vast roof.



Here the southern end of the city is not screened by the vast white Monument. It presents its slender flank and is more graceful in this modesty. The Capitoline group rises in a buff mass from which stands out the broad façade of that church which, on its eery, at the top of one hundred and twenty-four steps, deserves its name, the quaintest in Rome, Santa Maria in Aracoeli (Saint Mary in the Rainbow); next it is the campanile of the yellow Campidoglio; and between them in the distance are the two cupolas and the tower of Santa Maria Maggiore. Beyond this group three hollow arches rise nakedly above an unseen valley. The arches are the survival of the Basilica of Constantine and they look down into the vale of the Roman Forum. Next, upper tiers of the Colosseum come in view, and farther off a monumental mass trumpets its presence. One even makes out a line of giant statues on its high façade. It is the basilica of Saint John Lateran, and here, until 1870, the popes were crowned. Somewhere in the plain this side, among the thick clutter of habitations, is the site of the Circus Maximus where in the time of Augustus two hundred thousand spectators might find seats at one time to watch the races, the games and the gladiators.

Behind Rome and giving this view a character all its own, one sees from here the noble reredos of mountains, the Romans' refuge from the summer heat. The

southerly group are the Alban Hills, dotted with white towns of which, one is assured, the largest and whitest is Frascati. Far away, across the Capitoline, a wraith on the horizon is the twin peak of Monte Velino. It is dwarfed by nearer hills, but, half-way to the Adriatic, or fifty miles away, it may be seen because it rises 8,165 feet above the sea. On the right of it are the Tiburtini Hills, up whose flank is Tivoli and the Villa d'Este and Hadrian's Villa, and on the left bank the dark heights of the delectable Sabine Mountains, whose praise was so often on Horace's pen.

In the morning light of the high sun Rome was a motley of orange and tan, buff and brown, ecru, gray and white. The same sun in its last moments, before descending behind the Janiculum, bathes the city in a glow of rose, and the roofs and domes and monuments are picked out in a delicate pink which softens slowly till the city seems a bed of broken coral. One by one familiar objects fade. By some magician's touch long lines of light show where the greater arteries of life reach out and the glow of pools of incandescence from invisible sources show where the broad piazzas are.

This is the time to leave her. Descend into the city as the sun disappears, and cut through the smaller streets, among shadows with the gray of lead and the brown of bronze. The way for the most part

is marked by corner brackets whose flickering tapers pierce the darkness only to accent it. A lesser glow reflects from the tinsel of old wall shrines. Archways open into moonlit courts. Broad doorways open to dim crowded rooms alive with chatter to the obbligate of a soft guitar.

Leave Rome so, as you came, in the night, and let the morning light wake you far away, among other scenes, your memory of her an undisturbed dream.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CASTELLI ROMANI

LITTLE TOWNS ON THE ALBAN HILLS—FRASCATI—ANCIENT TUSCULUM—THE ROMAN CAMPAGNA—AN ARTFUL GUIDE—HALF-FARE ON ITALIAN RAILWAYS—LAKE ALBANO—CASTEL GANDOLFO—LUNCHING IN THE WINE-CARTERS' OSTERIA—ARICCIA'S STONE POEM—NEMI IN ITS JADE CHALICE—THE SUNKEN BARGES OF CALIGULA—THE INFIORATA OF GENZANO—A STREET PAVED WITH MOSAICS MADE OF FLOWERS

CASTELLI ROMANI are two words continually jingled in the ear while one remains in Rome.

There is a question of wine to sip with a collation of spaghetti and salad, or risotta and fruit, or a fish from Ostia eaten with delicate new potatoes and a spray of broccoli. The whispered suggestion is Castelli Romani. Often as not when one goes abroad, meandering through the older quarters between the southern hills, one must flatten himself against a wall, or happily there is an arch or doorway for retreat, while a splendidly caparisoned horse advances down the narrow street before a high two-wheeled cart piled up with wine casks and blooming at the top with a



hood from which the decorator may have omitted a few colors, though he probably has not. Where does it come from? The answer is always **Castelli Romani**. From the Janiculum, the Aventine and other outlooks on this side of the city the last hills southward across the Campagna seem to beckon to their green slopes mottled with white towns. They are the Alban Hills and their **Castelli Romani**.

So when the city irks, as any city will, even Rome on spring days when the country calls, there seems no place to ramble more inviting than the **Castelli Romani**. And it's doubtful whether there is.

**Castelli Romani**, the name given collectively to the towns on the summits and slopes of the Alban Hills, include Frascati, Grotta Ferrata, Rocca di Papa, Marino, Castel Gandolfo, Albano, Ariccia, Genzano, Nemi, and a few others less consequential.

The Alban Hills are not a part of the Sabine Mountains, but stand detached, in themselves the cone of an enormous crater, in which are other craters, two of them marked by the crater lakes of Albano and Nemi. The cone of the interior and highest crater rises to its highest in Monte Cavo and Punta Faette, both over thirty-one hundred feet. The hillsides and contiguous valleys of lava and tufa are one almost continuous vineyard whose grapes are the reservoir of Rome's favorite wine.

Hastily these towns may, by tram and motor, be

visited in a day. But they are more enjoyably done, in part at least, afoot, with the pleasant leisure of four days. That at any rate was our holiday here, timed to top off with that rare flower festival, restored in recent years, the *Infiorata di Genzano*, at Corpus Christi.

We went by early evening across the star-lit Campagna up to Frascati and made a start at sunrise up to the high site of Tusculum. Augusto was our guide. He had the entrée of the front way into and the secret of the short-cut out of the lovely gardens and parks of the Villas Aldobrandini and Ruffinella on the way up the mountain, and of the Villa Mondragone on the way down. His fee was modest. He nearly broke our hearts, however, in an ingenuous flank attack upon our pocketbooks.

Above the villas the way led up along grassy lanes through densely leaved woodlands and over green clearings where sheep graze. Any one who imagines that there are no wooden fences in Italy will be surprised to find them here in plenty. The diversions of the walk are the ruins of an amphitheater which once seated three thousand spectators, an arena now called the School of Cicero, other ruins offered as the Villa of Cicero, a theater across whose stage one looked on nothing less than the Campagna as far as the horizon, higher and higher points with views in all directions each of which seemed unsurpassable, yet

all fading before the outlook from the lofty point where the citadel of ancient Tusculum once stood.

This city had a fabled origin. Tradition ascribes it to Telegonus, son of Ulysses and Circe. It was more certainly known to have been the birthplace of Cato the elder, and here Cicero had his home. However long Tusculum may have endured, its last vestige crumbled when the Romans destroyed the citadel in 1191. These are but shadowy wraiths, and have a feeble hold on interest in competition with the actual panorama spread out under the morning sun.

On the right, across a depression, are the much-sung Sabine Mountains, and at their foot is Palestrina, the Præneste of the ancients, captured by Camillus in 380 B. C. and later held by Marius till seized by Sulla in the Civil Wars. At this distance one can imagine its famous Temple of Fortune still standing there and crowds still hanging on the words of its oracle. Farther north there is a spur on whose low slopes Hadrian built that most famous villa of antiquity. Just there, too, high up, though out of sight, is Tivoli, where Augustus and other emperors came to avoid the heat of the capital, where rich and generous Mæcenæ lived, and where the Renaissance has left, according to some, its finest expression of landscape gardening in the wooded and watered gradients that descend to the dark avenues of cypresses of the Villa d'Este.

On the left, from Tusculum, the Alban Hills pile up. The white patches of Grotta Ferrata, Marino and Castel Gandolfo are picked out below, while nearer the sky is the peak of Monte Cavo with Rocca di Papa perched on a shoulder. Past Grotta Ferrata the hills drop and flatten into fifteen miles of green floor beyond which sparkle the waters which are the Mediterranean itself.

Between the sea and the Sabines the Campagna rolls off northwestward to a dim inscrutable line where land and sky meet on the misty horizon of the rolling country of Latium. Centered in this scene, seemingly, at first, a mere dusky cloud, two thousand feet below is Rome. The city at this distance is singularly inarticulate. The sun finds reflection in only one recognizable object, and it is St. Peter's dome upon the city's farther rim. Occasional *contadini* huts make white specks nearer on the green plain, but roundabout is not a single village. Broken sectors of slender arched aqueducts recall the greatness of the Roman engineers, as does a dusty white line which plumbs direct to the city; and it can only be the street of glory and tombs, the road that led to Brindisium, Anthony's and Cæsar's way to Egypt, and the legions' highway to the Imperial East, the Via Appia.

Our Augusto did his job well, both of them, for he not only annotated every site and object, but, as

hinted, his side-line was sympathy. Craftily he depended on the first half-hour of acquaintance to disarm us, building for himself, meantime, a character for amiability and integrity.

We had saturated ourselves in the artificial loveliness of the great villas, and, having climbed as high as the little theater, were resting on a low wall, the sun-parlor of a thousand glistening lizards, when with suave casualness he made his first opening, based on a curiosity intended to be complimentary.

"You are French?"

Unimaginable.

"English?"

No, nor English.

Another quizzical survey, and then tentatively:  
"American?"

It was admitted.

His next question surprised the most: "Rio or Buenos Aires?"

The other America was confessed. The pretender knew it all the while and had only masked the approach to the opening he was playing for.

Into the "No?" with which he greeted this he put his joy at the miracle of such a happy coincidence. Then he produced a weathered post-card to explain it: "I have a sister in America. She is a nun, in the Sacred Heart, in Chicago. See!" Thus was the first link forged.



In one of the chestnut lanes between sheep pastures Augusto suddenly dropped on his knees, but not in prayer. That is to say, whatever may have been in his heart, prayer was not his apparent purpose. Instead he fell to digging a buff growth, the shape and about the size of a large orange, burrowing in the earth for its fungous supports. He called it *spongere*. At the next rest, above the theater, he dedicated his purple handkerchief to making a bundle of his find, and volunteered: "This will make a fine meal for my family. The poor must be content with little, especially when one has five little daughters, the oldest eight, the youngest only two."

At the summit he allowed the view to register its effect and then he registered his: "How long ago the war was. I have four wounds. See," and he presented a scarred forearm. Then with a smile that was intended to be ingenuous: "The others I think I can not show you."

Later while we were descending he expressed concern lest the trip were too fatiguing, which made it natural for him to confide: "I am used to walking, now. Once I had a *vettura*. But my horse died. Now I am only a poor guide, on foot."

Afterward he added his last touch: "How fine to be American. So rich. Here we are so poor."

Had we not by this time reached the parting of our ways I felt that either my heart or my pocketbook

would break. But there was healing balm in the smile and thanks with which he accepted his fee, as contracted, plus, of course, the rightful expectation of one so nearly akin as to have a sister somewhere in America, and brought so low in his estate by war wounds and the loss of his horse and the misfortune of being only a guide.

From Frascati we took the steam-train to Grotta Ferrata, and saw the Domenichino's masterpieces frescoed on the Chapel of St. Nilus in the monastery of the Greek monks. But we did not go up to Rocca di Papa for the climb to Monte Cavo; we were told the view there would be finer than from Tusculum, and were afraid it might be, and so discount what seems a sufficiently satisfying experience.

Somewhere near Marino a stocky woman got on the train accompanied by a small boy, and by her performance revealed an unsuspected instance of Italian common sense. The boy was not so small, yet the woman on sitting at once drew him up on her lap and held him in the cradle of her arm. It seemed a touching maternal attention—at least until the conductor came to collect the fares. She tendered the coins for a fare and a half, but the official demanded two. She protested that she had never been obliged to pay more than a half-fare for her "little one." The conductor quietly repeated: "Two." She insisted that she had been required to pay only a half-fare

that very day, coming out of town, and pleaded that he was a mere baby, so tiny, so—— The conductor did not listen further. He moved toward the car door and beckoned her to follow after him. He passed out to the platform, and she and the boy followed. She did not take her bag, which seemed odd, for it looked as if the two were to be put off the train on to the country roadside. Instead he made the boy stand up straight against the outer side of the door. Then he again laconically demanded: "Two," and this time the woman paid without further protest or argument.

The explanation of the situation was simple. The Italian law requires a full fare for youngsters, not of a certain age, but of a certain height. On the tramway door-jamb there was a porcelain plate with a mark placed at exactly one meter from the floor. There was no question of age. Indeed, there was no argument of height. If the youngster's head extended above this mark by any fraction he must pay full fare. When the woman resumed her seat, she did not again take the boy in her lap, but a little resentfully elbowed a seat for him by her side.

Artists come to Marino to see a *Trinity* by Guido Reni and a *St. Rochus* by Domenichino in its churches. Less tangible is the interest which attaches to it as a stronghold first of the Frangipani family, then the Orsini and, since 1424, the Colonnas. It is easily passed through, however, for the promises

of the next stretch of the road which leads around the rim of the crater whose fiery depths have long since been quenched by the waters of Lake Albano.

The lake is elliptical in form and six and a quarter miles around; its banks, actually the deep inner wall of the crater, are green with terraced vineyards, and thickly sprinkled with *villini*, tiny villas. Across it one looks up to Monte Cavo, the purple summit of this volcanic group; away from it one again has repeated vistas of the whole panorama of the Campagna, Rome and the Mediterranean to distances which baffle the eye.

Somewhere here on the shore of Lake Albano was Rome's mother city, Alba Longa, founded, tradition says, by Ascanius, son of Æneas. It was the scene of the legendary combat between the Horatii and the Curatii; and here the religious festivals of the Latin league were celebrated as late as the days of Augustus. Rome had, however, long before subdued the city and, for punishment of one of its leaders, destroyed it, respecting only the temples. Some one since has been less considerate for now even they have disappeared. All that survives the misty tradition is the city's name, now contracted into the name of town and lake.

We were told that Castel Gandolfo farther on stands where Alba Longa stood. If so, the vanished city had a priceless site. This newer town clusters

about a former summer palace of the popes, and about it spreads the luscious gardens of numberless villas, incomparably most impressive of which is that whose chiseled bees proclaim it to be the Barberini's, on the site of the villa of Domitian.

From Castel Gandolfo to Albano, about two miles beyond, there are a high road and a low road along whose whole length the glare and heat are tempered by the shadows of continuous avenues of Ilex. We chose the upper way, and went afoot into Albano, and found it a town atilt, clinging to the steep slopes, and level only where it straddles the Via Appia, here risen to a shoulder of the Alban Hills.

As we entered Albano the inclination to press on fought a losing fight with appetite, and surrendered at sight of a line of painted canopies sitting like blossoming bonnets above a procession of wine carts loaded for Rome. The sturdy horses munched their cuts of damp sweet grass and tossed their many tassels to the jingle of their metaled harness as they fought off annoying flies. The drivers were nowhere in sight, but, near by, a *trattoria* door stood open, and by the lusty camaraderie inside we knew they were there, and entered.

The light within was dim, and the air was heavy. Two long refectory tables paralleled the room's length. One was crowded with laborers, at the other the carters sat. When we hesitated whether to in-



trude, or how, the nearer carters pushed along and amiably made space.

In such a place, at such a time, it's no good considering a selection of food. There is always, indeed, there is only, one safe dish. One such, under attack or almost conquered, was before every one else in the room. So we, too, took our portions from the boiling kettle of spaghetti. The price was small, the portion in inverse ratio to it.

When the mountain of white *pasta* came, it was made to blush under a gravy rich with tomatoes and chicken livers stewed in oil, and then to pale a little under a shower of grated Parmesan. No choice of wine was offered. The *vino del paese*, the countryside's own wine, was brought in a small carafe. It may not have been appetizing quite in proportion to its fame. But when is a product best sampled at its source? The choice is always sent away to hunt the highest markets. A dry throat, however, gave it relish. Otherwise a slice of cheese and an orange were the inevitables and the limit of the rude but sufficient feast.

It was not easy to decide whether the carters talked or ate the louder. Some one, listening to a tableful of Italians eating spaghetti, remarked, "You are now listening to their version of their national anthem." But the food contented these men for, when they had pushed their plates away, they

sprawled on the board supporting an ear in a well-calloused palm, and conversation was left only to the garrulous while a nodding silence fell over the rest.

It may have been coincidence that we all rose together, and we waited to see the drivers climb on to their perches under the hoods and settle each in his padded cradle between casks. One of them was scarce awake as, in settling, he grunted: "Now, by Bacchus, I shall have some sleep." The slow, lumbering, often all-night trip down to the capital is, indeed, one long siesta for the drivers. The horses are well habituated and know the way undirected. Once started they seldom stop, unless halted before a roadside *osteria* while a collation of bread and wine is taken by their masters. The poorer or very provident bring their own bottle and their own length of bread, and they descend only to stretch and gossip, or perhaps to flirt with a barmaid here and there. We stayed to see the horses strain into action and to watch them on their way down the long, white, narrow Via Appia, that canal down which since its beginning the juice of the grapes of the Castelli Romani has flowed into Rome.

The antiquity of Albano, in the forms of cisterns, columns, tombs and other scraps, breaks out in many gardens and villa grounds, but, on the whole, after the carts descended to the Campagna, the town held no compelling interest. It was easy to leave it and

take to the open road once more. Past the outskirts of the city stood a curious ruin, a massive Etruscan tomb, locally but erroneously called the Tomb of the Horatii and Curatii. It would have been so much more interesting if this had only been so. But the untenable fable could not detract from the essential beauty of the monument.

The mile to Ariccia was nothing, what with the diversion of gay gardens, of glimpses of the Villa Chigi, of the wayside churches, the monasteries in the hills and roadside *osterie* (in which name one readily recognizes kinship with hostelry), the view up the wooded heights and down, over other woods, across a sea of green to the sea of blue where the two meet again at the bathing shore of Anzio. Straight ahead, on the road's level where it leaps across a thousand-foot ravine over three superimposed arcades of six, twelve and eighteen arches, stood the white lump of Ariccia.

Lest one push on believing it not worth a halt, Ariccia brings its solitary treasure to the roadside, where momentarily it expands into piazza, and with it challenges one to pass. It is a bit of lyric architecture, ignored by cicerones who lead this way, and so the more alluring with the freshness of the surprise of finding it. The whole composition is in miniature. At its center is a chapel, circular from its foundation and tapering gracefully to the vanishing point of its

dome. Complementary buildings on either side send out curved stone arms to embrace it. Time and the elements have beveled all its edges and softened its surfaces to dull gray monotones, except near its base where, thigh-high to shoulder-high, a band of softly glowing patina suggests the generations of loungers who, here in its shadow, have found support not exactly spiritual. Before it two shallow fountain bowls hold up full-blown bouquets of green. It was enough.

The other two miles into Genzano were made to seem nothing by an officer who knew and told all about Lake Nemi and the floral carpet to be spread in Genzano the second morning beyond. He found us cheerful lodgings in the town, and would not part with us on any other terms than a glass of his own vintage, in his own garden. Before the emptied glass we confessed a previous error; for he made it obvious that all the best wine of the Castelli Romani does not go out to the highest markets, not quite all.

In the morning we climbed from the Piazza del Plebiscito up the steep street to the church which looks down its length, and after two turns and a twist were on the Belvedere with Lake Nemi a disk at our feet. Crater walls, freshly green with their forest growths, rise three hundred feet above the lake which is almost circular and covers some four hundred acres. The winds never trouble the waters of Nemi. It is perennially unruffled, a still surface, azure with

the reflection of sky above it, a turquoise at the bottom of a jade chalice.

The ancients called it the Mirror of Diana. Nothing is more natural than that Diana's temple should have risen by this shore or that a sacred grove should have here been dedicated to her rites. Nothing more natural than that this spot should have inspired Ovid and Horace and Virgil in their serene verses to this deity, for the silence and mystery here evoke reality for the fabled goddess, for the queen of silence, for the mistress of shady wooded places, for the sister of radiant Phœbus Apollo, who in her own right was goddess of the moonlit skies.

In the presence of this cupped and secluded gem it is understandable that Caligula, maddened by unrest, tormented by lust and ennui, should have sought his villa here for the strange pagan blend of religion and pleasure, of sacred rites and lascivious pleasures in which he indulged. This was the Caligula, who, according to Suetonius, "surprised all the prodigals that ever lived in the devices of his profuse expenditures; inventing a new kind of bath, with strange dishes and suppers; washing in precious unguents, both warm and cold; drinking pearls of immense value in vinegar, and serving up for his guests loaves and other victuals modeled in gold."

At the bottom of the lake there are remains which have been the mystery of science and history for nine-





*Photo by Anderson, Rome*

The Lake of Nemi sometimes called the Mirror of Diana in whose depths are buried the state barges of the Emperor Caligula



Photo by Enit

### Genzano

The street paved with fresh flowers on the annual *Infiorata*. Most conspicuous is a floral reproduction of the airship Norge, rising above white clouds. Above it under the wings of the Roman eagle an American flag is recognized, and higher up a Roman face on the red, white and green tricolor of Italy

teen hundred years. From time to time fishermen have hauled for fish and found rare objects of metal and marble in their nets. In the fifteenth century divers reported a sunken vessel of imperial magnificence, and a raft was floated on empty barrels above the spot and ropes and hooks were let down to raise the treasure. But the stoutest ropes snapped, and so, too, did interest for another hundred years.

None of the attempts since has, however, disclosed so much as Borghi's efforts in 1895. He recovered many beautiful fragments now in the museums of Rome, among them a bronze head of the Medusa, and bronze lions' heads and wolves' heads with heavy mooring rings. He established the dimensions of at least one barge, and it was over two hundred feet long and over seventy feet broad. But he raised fragments only; ages had encrusted the great barge itself too deep in the mud, and generations of fishermen had warmed themselves too many winters before flames which consumed beams stolen from the sunken hull.

Some have said that Caligula had here constructed an island in the shape of a Roman state barge. Others incline to the belief that the barge floated and was used to convey the emperor's guests and victims across the lake to the orgies in the groves of Diana, or may indeed have been the scene itself of the cruel escapades of the erotic and neurotic emperor.

Whatever it may have been, to-day its state defies all efforts to raise it. To this challenge Italian engineering has now boldly answered that, if they may not raise it, they will then remove the waters of Nemi and end for ever the mystery at its bottom. Little Nemi is seventy-nine feet higher than Lake Albano. The favored project is to drain the higher lake into the lower lake and later pump the water back again, after the precious remnants of the ships have been revealed and removed.

Filled with these fables of Diana and cruel Caligula and the ingenious schemes of the Italian engineers, we descended and made a day of it about the lake. Where the road descends a group of little children were romping under flowering trees. They broke off twigs of blossoms and, running after us, offered them with a pretense of shyness that counterfeited it prettily, yet they were not too shy to ask for a *soldino*, a little soldo, an abbreviation which was a bit affected since the copper soldo is the smallest, the irreducible minimum, of all Italian coins. Thereafter only the drone of bees and insects, and the rare note of a bird, broke the warm silence, until near noon, and near the town of Nemi, there came across the lake the angelus rung by the bells of Genzano, clear and close, as if the water were a sounding-board.

Nemi is an uninteresting village clustered about the former Orsini castle and we hurried through it



to the garden where are the remains of Diana's temple, and then to the lakeside nearest the sunken ships. But the waters were cryptically still, unrevealing of their enigmatic treasure, and we could only hope to return when they have departed under the mountain to Albano, to leave their secret delivered up after nineteen hundred years.

On the way up to Genzano we overtook women and girls carrying and carting flowers, first evidence of the next day's *infiorata*. Yet the officer had told enough for us to know that the preparations were far advanced. They had been planned months before.

The first step had been the allotment of sectors of the broad pavement of the hillside street, reaching from the piazza up to the church, for purposes of decoration. The engineers, artists and gardeners of Genzano divide the street among themselves, taking each, or by groups, a space the width between the buildings and varying in depth from twenty to eighty feet. For each such space a colored model is drawn, sometimes of a mere design, sometimes of a pictorial subject. Then they file a requisition for colors of various but exact quantities with which to paint their pictures. But these colors are of pigments which do not find their way to artists' palettes. The colors are prepared in the conservatories, in the gardens and fields, and along the roadsides and under forest trees and among the rocks, everywhere that petals bloom,



in nature's own laboratory, for the pictures are to be painted with flowers.

The day before the festival another battalion is mustered, a battalion of women and girls, some on foot, some with donkeys, and the more fortunate though not more willing or harder working ones with carts. They deploy in all directions. Flowers have been seeded and pruned and nursed to bloom at this time everywhere about Genzano that flowers are cultivated. But the season is, in fact, one when wild things flower fullest, too. So the women and girls go out to gather not only from the villas and gardens, but from the hills and from the lakeside, from the wooded places and along the roads, and the fair marauders come into town at evening rich with their floral loot. Later, when I lay in bed and heard the silence punctuated with the rattle of cart wheels, or with the more delicate patter of an unshod donkey, I could visualize more and more flowers being brought in for the feast.

For those concerned, the next day, the day of *inforata* is busiest of all. All these innumerable cartloads and basketfuls of flowers must be sorted, all the blue in one place, all the red in another, and so through all the color gamut. Then each separate color must itself be graded in groups from pale to dark. In the morning the spaces in the street are ruled off according to the original allotment, and each one

possessed of a space marks off the skeleton of his design on the full scale directly on the pavement.

When this is done, comes the next exciting moment, when the pigments, that is to say, the flowers, are distributed, and suddenly the whole length of the street becomes a disordered splash of color. At three precisely the artists begin to paint their pictures.

At dawn, too, the little town, at other times so drowsy, is further enlivened by the vanguard of the crowds coming into Genzano from all directions. They line the street, kept off the patterns by ropes of green stretched on both sides from piazza to church, moving from panel to panel, watching and admiring the skill with which the designs are brought out. Meantime the town adorns itself, the windows are flung open, and over the little iron balconies are draped rugs and tapestries or any bit of colored fabric that will lend gala to the scene.

The floral work is expertly and quickly done. From three to four hours are sufficient for the frail mosaics of petals to reveal their completed designs. Where figures were attempted they were the faces emblematic of new Italy, or a cross draped with a white scarf, or a patron saint, or a popular hero, all set in varying ornamental borders. Never for two years are the pictures alike, it is said.

As the last artist withdraws and the completed works of all are wholly revealed, the activity of the

crowd increases. As it rushes from one picture to another, it laughs and points, and gasps and exclaims, with well-justified surprise and appreciation.

No more extraordinary effect in floral decoration can be imagined, than this broad street carpeted with flowers and tilted so that the whole assembly of designs may be seen at once. But who, unprepared for it, could imagine the dramatic sequel?

A great altar has been raised before the church on the hilltop. A procession by another route has reached the altar. Before it benediction is given the kneeling crowds down the patterned street. Then several exciting things happen simultaneously. The priest still holds the jeweled ciborium in his raised hands. Over them a golden canopy is raised. A crowd of attendants carrying candles and swinging incense bank the canopy bearers. A band of musicians and the pealing bells all but drown the chorus of chanters. It is the supreme moment, when this exquisite floral offering is sacrificed to the Corpus Christi. The procession advances, slowly and solemnly, down the hillside street, all others filing either side the precious carpet, the priest, bearing the sacred wafer, marching alone, straight across this frail matchless carpet which, with infinite care, these pious people have made only to be the momentary pathway of their Lord.

## CHAPTER IX

### LITTLE HILL TOWNS OF UMBRIA AND TUSCANY

NARNI AND THE BROKEN ARCH OF AUGUSTUS—TERNI—  
THE BIRTHPLACE OF TWO TACITUSES—CASCADE OF  
MARMORE—SPOLETO—THE JOYOUS FRIAR—VALE OF  
CLITIMNUS—WHERE DANTE WAS FIRST PRINTED—  
SAINT FRANCIS' FIRST HOME—GATHERING INDUL-  
GENCES—THE GEOGRAPHICAL CENTER OF ITALY—WAY-  
SIDE MEMORIES—HOME OF CHIANTI AND THE FIASCO—  
A TUSCAN SHEIK—TOWERS OF SAN GIMIGNANO—  
BOCCACCIO'S TOWN

TO NEARLY every one Italy is at once a land of memory or promise, of delights experienced or longed for. The very names ring and sing, symphonic in suggestions which beckon and invite. They are panoramic with incomparable visions of nature and art; they are processional with emperors and popes, tyrants and criminals, saints and mystics, painters and poets and builders, every type of human agent, good and evil.

How pleasant and pregnant the ear finds such phrases as the Seven Hills of Rome, the Plains of Lombardy, the Bay of Naples, the Canals of Venice.

Among such grouped names belong the hill towns of Tuscany and Umbria. Most of those who have journeyed between Rome and Florence have seen little more than the silhouettes of Orvieto and Chiusi and Arezzo, all perched high on their rocks. When opportunity offers the byways lead some, however, up one or the other valley of these lower Apennines, to loiter in Assisi or Perugia or Siena. Other than these the hill towns here are scarcely more than names, or pictures seen in passing.

That it was so with me brought the suggestion to climb to Narni and Spoleto, Trevi and Spello, San Gimignano and Certaldo; to add a third dimension to the mere length and breadth of what had been flat pictures seen only in perspectives.

In this idea of seeing a side other than the outside of these towns I had great comfort from the final desperation of an American friend. All her life she had traveled to and from New York City by the New York Central line on the east bank of the Hudson. Once, late in life, she made the journey on the west shore, and declared that she had great relief in "seeing the backs of things she had always seen the front of before."

Narni is found hovering over the chasm of the Nera River just above its union with Father Tiber, in a natural cloister of mountains opening only eastward where a smiling valley spreads a little for



the eight miles to Terni. Narni is a modest but authentic introduction to the smaller Umbrian hill towns. The enfolding forest-clad hills are already Umbria. They sit in silence looking only at one another. Life would surely suffocate here if it were not for the long arms of valleys which at times reach in and push these hills apart to make room for snatches of Eden.

Trains deign to stop at Narni, but the time-tables do not pause to record the hours of their arrival and departure. Indeed, the town is so far in the sky that passers-by on the iron road may be quite unconscious of its existence, much less its significance, and from the car window spend their entire interest on the single lofty arch, which remains to suggest the superb bridge the Emperor Augustus here raised between mountain flanks to unite the broken ends of the Via Flaminia.

This superb fragment so seen does not, however, suggest any part of the spell it works when visited in a silence and solitude broken only by the tender singing of the torrent underneath; whether one finds it grave and suggestive at the twilight of evening or dawn, or brooding and mysterious under the high coasting clouds of a moonlit night. Then, though its broken reach can not even bridge the torrent, it seems indeed to bridge the centuries. So seen it is easy to understand why this lofty stone remnant has

for ages been regarded as one of the noblest relics of imperial times.

The town itself has played a rôle in history, it has its art treasures, and it has contributed its quota of great personages. It has had its share of the advantages and disadvantages of its strategic position on the road to Rome. The Emperor Nerva here first saw the light, as later did Pope John XIII, Galeotto Marzio, gallant captain of sword and pen, and Gattamelata, generalissimo of the Venetian Republic, whose valor inspired Donatello in 1447 to model his now famous statue, to be seen in Padua before the Church of Il Santo, the first equestrian monument which had been made in bronze since antiquity.

From Narni we walked to Terni, at the other end of the valley, and it was the more friendly for its consideration in remaining at the foot of the mountains and not requiring the tribute of a climb. It is rather modern, after Narni, and in no way so picturesque; but it scores on other points, uniquely as the birthplace of two Tacituses, one the emperor and the other that historian who has been the plague of so many Latin lessons. As to the spots, much less the houses, where these twin immortals were born, modern Terni places no restraint on the searcher's imagination.

Little here, indeed, seems very old except deep in its roots. Any one drifting back to Terni, from the seventeenth century even, would recognize nothing

except the strange newness of his still lovely Church of Saint Francis, the Bernini façade of the Romanic cathedral, and the medieval gate on the side toward Spoleto. In a town that seems superficially so modern, I came with surprise on a well-preserved relic which, in view of the swift march of progress, seemed indefinitely old in certain features of its out-of-dateness. It greeted me from the shelf of a tobacco shop, where it stood, alone of its kind among the rolled and twisted and papered weeds, the salt boxes and match-boxes of a typical little purveyor of the government's monopolies. How came it to wander into such company? And how long ago? It was an English guide-book to this central belt of Italy, printed in 1843! We went out of that shop together, and sat down in the piazza to open an acquaintance.

In matters historic and artistic the modern guide-books are but its echo. It had its piquancy from its full and practical treatment of all the machinery of travel when central Italy was the Papal States and ecclesiastics sat in all seats of civil administration, and, too, when the steam railway had not yet penetrated the peninsula. It charmed as well from its practical statements of what a traveler needed most to know of the inns and their reputation, of the direction and condition of post roads, the length of the posts, the price of cabriolets and carriages and of horses and postilions, and of the points where extra

horses and oxen even were needed and found to lift the vehicles over the hills.

Turning, for a practical test, to the information as to the inns of Terni, I found that, in 1843 as now, the Europa was its most conspicuous tavern. Having enjoyed its present hospitality it was reassuring to know that nearly ninety years of landlords had maintained its standard, for the old guide noted it as "very good." It was, perhaps, not unnatural to wonder for how many former generations, centuries perhaps, this spot had been dedicated to hospitality.

The most interesting feature about Terni is, however, outside it—an easy walk up the narrowing glen of the Nera to the cascade of the Marmore. Of course a Central African whose trail crosses the Zambesi below the Victoria Falls could no more be expected to marvel here than could those guides who daily fatten off honeymooners at Niagara. But Europeans go into rapture before it, for here they find themselves in the presence of one of the highest waterfalls on their continent. In three uneven breaks it leaps over a precipice more than six hundred feet high.

Lord Byron devoted one of his many Italian ecstasies to this waterfall, and even in his more restrained mood he judged it "worth all the cascades and torrents of Switzerland put together: the Staubbach, Reichenbach, Pisse Vache, Fall of Arpenaz, and so on are rills in comparative appearance."

But neither the Marmore's height nor volume nor beauty would seem to commend it to curiosity in the same degree as does the astonishing fact that nature never intended or placed a waterfall on the face of this precipice. The whole fabric is artificial!

This, its really distinguishing feature, I found on the spot thus set forth by my new-found guide of 1843:

"The formation of the cascade was the work of the Romans. The valley of the Velinus [a tributary of the Nera from the east, flowing down past the hill town of Rieti] was subject to frequent inundations from the river, which was so charged with calcareous matter, that it filled its bed with deposits, and thus subjected the rich plains of Rieti to constant overflows from the lakes which it forms at that part of its course. The drainage of the stagnant waters produced by the occasional overflow of these lakes and of the river was first attempted by Curius Dentatus, the conqueror of the Sabines, B. C. 271. He caused a channel to be made for the Velinus, through which the waters of that river were carried into the Nar [Nera] over a precipice hundreds of feet high."

The train carries one on to Spoleto in three quarters of an hour, tunneling under Monte Somma, but, other than walking, an open car on the open road is the way best to come close to the spirit of the Umbrian Hills. While resolving these facts over a coffee in the piazza at Terni, and wondering how best to accommodate ourselves to them, an opportunity came to



us in the person of a chauffeur, remembered now only as Mario. After carrying a party down to Rome, he was driving his car empty back to Florence, and he made a price and promises which left no other alternative than booking with him. He provided his share of the diversion.

The memory of Italian hill towns visualizes them as seen from the valleys, outlined against the sky, beckoning from above and perhaps more ethereal for it, and extracting the deference of a climb, but, like all precious things, a little more precious for the difficulty of attainment. This is why it was so much more surprising to approach Spoleto as we did.

The swift run up the valley of the torrent of the Tescina, where once brigands made travel exciting in the days of posting, over the heights of Somma two thousand feet above the sea and yet another two thousand feet below the tip of Monte Fionchi, and then a little way down the torrent Tessino, brought us to an opening through which we saw Spoleto at our feet and, a thousand feet below it, the long smiling valley which reaches up to Perugia but visible only so far as its elbow where Foligno stands.

One side of Spoleto is five hundred feet above the other which goes far to explain why everything here seems just above or just below everything else. In the continual turning and twisting of its tiny streets, zigzagging up and down, one senses the pastoral days

when here Nature's own engineers, the cattle with their instinct for economy of effort in climbing, first laid out the hillside paths. In what historic twilight might that have been?

Long ago, no doubt, for here a city stood three centuries before our era, already so strong that when Hannibal triumphantly led his mighty legions of men and elephants across the Alps and as far as the gates of Spoleto, Livy testifies how its inhabitants gave the Carthaginians their first repulse on Italian soil. Since then the memory of the event has been kept alive by the name of the city's northern gate, the Porta Fuga (the Gate of the Flight).

Architectural remarks from Italy's entire history are engraved in the building of Spoleto. There are the ruins of a Roman amphitheater; the house where Vespasian's mother lived still enriched with its mosaic pavements; a vast detached medieval castle on its own walled hill, once the home of Lucrezia Borgia; history and beauty in the vista at every turn. And outside the town the hills are wreathed by a whole chaplet of churches each with its interest, inviting walks out to them through vineyard lanes and woody paths.

Mario, who quickly revealed himself as being as good a cicerone as he was chauffeur, had advised concentration on the Cathedral. But that is obvious advice in nearly every little city on this peninsula,

since the Duomo is not only its temple, but its museum, and its gallery of art as well. This one in Spoleto is seen first from above and is descended to in order to be approached across a rude neglected piazza whose floor is a quaint rough tapestry of gray brick set on end and faintly green with the grass which has grown, undisturbed, between the crevices. The scarred and weathered façade, rising before a rocky spur of mountain, looks as if it were chiseled from it and as if, in entering, one would enter a cavern church, as in the ravine of Matera, or at Santa Rosalia on Monte Pellegrino above Palermo.

The features of the façade are its superb arched portico with open-air pulpits on either side, the balustraded terrace above it, and the upper front blossoming with eight rose windows. As we approached, Mario made vivid Spoleto's annual gala when, on Easter morning, the mass is sung in the early spring sunshine at an altar erected on the terrace above the portico and devotional crowds pack the piazza and the windows and the roofs all about.

If, within, the nave is stark and bare, it is a more proper frame for the apse which flowers from floor to roof with Fra Lippo Lippi's last frescoes. The church is dedicated to the Virgin and these paintings gloriously illustrate the *Annunciation*, the *Birth of Christ*, and the *Death and Assumption and Coronation of His Mother*. These are sometimes spoken of as Fra

Lippo's masterpieces, but they are now too much the worse for time, damp and candle-smoke for one to be certain of the validity of such an estimate.

The Joyous Friar, as Fra Lippo came to be known by a life of little ecclesiastical reserve, lived his last years there and died in Spoleto. He did not dedicate them unreservedly to work on the choir walls. He did not dedicate them even to the service of a single love. In that respect he was apparently as democratic as he was merry. Tradition has it that one of his ladies was not too forbearing and she and her relatives registered with poison their resentment of his infidelity.

Spoleto seems not to have loved Fra Lippo less for his frailties, but rather more for the honor it esteemed it that he came to live there and leave his colorful rhapsodies on its cathedral walls, and himself in one of them. Lorenzo de' Medici came later to take his body off to Florence, but Spoleto refused to give him up, arguing quite logically that Florence had so many great men that it could well spare to little Spoleto its gay painter to continue to sleep where he laid down his brushes. Lorenzo was not less the Magnificent in his gesture of renunciation for, in deferring, he commanded the erection of the lovely wall tomb from which the round portrait of the great artist still looks out of its marble medallion toward his last pictures.

The road-bed up this lovely valley leading north from Spoleto is but a top dressing on the ancient Via Flaminia. Near its foot the river Clitumnus springs mysteriously from the Apennine limestone, and spreads itself among the willows and poplars of the vale sung by poets from Virgil to Byron and Carducci. Above it stands the so-called Temple of Clitumnus, named by Pliny, brooding over so much beauty with a beauty of its own worthy of any poet-fostered tradition.

But farther on at Trevi, coned on an eastern hill beneath its aerial campanile, at lofty Montefalco and Bevagna and Spello, and at lower Foligno, the sources of interest advance a thousand years and bring us nearer the figures which seem to have caught and perpetuated the soul of Umbria, for on these hills there is no church so mean but seems to have its priceless canvas of the famed Umbrian school. Whatever else these sanctuaries may not have, the shuffling sacristan will be sure to point out a canvas illuminated by Lo Spagna, Ghirlandaio, Fra Lippo, Niccola da Foligna, Perugino, or Pinturicchio, not yet wrested from the setting for which it was created. Mario gave a particular interest to Foligno when he told us what the guide neglected, that there we were in the town where the first printed edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy* was set up and published in 1472.

Yet, as one advances, even this great company



gives place to the humble immortal of that city but-tressed against the flank of frowning Subasio, to Saint Francis and his Assisi. Few who reach Italy from any other part of the earth fail to climb to the convent church which, built to the glory of Francis, glorifies Giotto as well. Nothing about Assisi disappoints, unless it be the crowds of devotees who rob it of the simplicity and charm still left to other towns in the Umbrian Hills.

As usual, the town was teeming with a pilgrimage at the processional hour. By remaining below at Santa Maria degli Angeli we escaped the excursion-ists and found that church more interesting for being empty, or nearly so. This great and comparatively modern edifice shelters at its center, beneath its dome, another and tiny church within the greater. It is the oratory, called the Portiuncula, founded in 352 by a company of hermits from Jerusalem, and restored in 512 by St. Benedict. The Portiuncula was the meeting place of Saint Francis and Saint Dominic, and the first center of the Franciscan order. At its rear is the cell where holy Francis died and the garden where his thornless roses blossom each spring.

Standing apart we were able to observe the pious peregrinations of the only other person in the church, a diligent pilgrim gathering indulgences. Certain such favors are granted to the faithful for each visit to the oratory of St. Francis. This man, on whose

pale face glowed the quiet rapture of a mystic, was nevertheless of so practical and literal a mind that he interpreted a "visit" to mean every entry within the oratory door. So, entering there for a momentary stay, he would return into the great nave a dozen paces, then turn about and reenter for another visit and another indulgence; he kept up this pacing back and forth, accumulating what might appear to be rather more than one man's share of these spiritual favors, throughout the two hours we spent in and about this church. He and his simple piety we thought, however, more in harmony with humble Francis than the herded excursionists processioning in the hill town above.

Toward evening the car bounded forward again, across the Tiber and up Perugia's heights, but, as we were in the midst of searching out only smaller towns, we merely stayed for dinner in this queenly city of so many jewels. But who can come to Perugia so hungry that he can forego glancing just once more over Umbria from her lofty terrace, that brow of her mountain rock, one thousand feet above the river, where stood the castle whose locked gates withstood the besieging of Totila the Goth for seven successive years. At her feet nearly the whole of her realm stretches out in view at one time. Mario at our elbow, enraptured, was eager to have us say it was the loveliest outlook in all his fair land. And we said it, though

I wondered why with mental reservation. Then remembering Sant' Elmo over Naples and the balcony curving about the high brow of Catanzaro, I knew that the scene was held a little this side of perfection by the absence of the sea. Mario, who furnished ecstasy and information with equal zest and relish, surprised us and quite turned our thoughts from the magic panorama, with the sober geographical fact that the spot under our feet was the exact center of the length and breadth of continental Italy.

With dinner well bestowed he drove us on in the early night around the rim of Lake Trasimeno where Hannibal dealt the Romans his deadliest blow; over the imperceptible barrier from Umbria into Tuscany with a glance toward Cortona, huddled and shadowy under the first star; across the vale of Chiana into the hills and into the night again.

In the first hours of darkness we reviewed objects we had seen in the valley during the day but had left unmentioned in the multiplicity of other interests. There was a young mother, a loose cloth draped over her head and shoulders and her babe on her knee, sitting in the shadow of an arch at a roadside *osteria* near Trevi, who looked the Madonna of a dozen altar-pieces seen in the Umbrian churches.

There was the long-legged monk behind his panniers of vegetables astride a mite of a donkey flecking wisps of dust with his sandaled toes; the

dark youths out of the vineyards who strode along hand in hand, scarlet blossoms behind their ears and more buttons on their jackets than a coster has; three nuns in blue with flaring white bonnets who in the sunlight had looked more ethereal than actual; occasional groups of strong nut-brown girls at work in the fields, pausing in firm graceful poses, laughing-eyed, to watch the passers-by, their heads wrapped loosely in purple or yellow or green or magenta kerchiefs with an end trailing over the shoulder; and a bent and twisted old hag, limping doubled and leaning on a stick twice her height, and looking as if she were old enough to have known Saint Francis, yet, as she stopped and turned to let us pass, squinting a smile into her merry old face as she screwed it up toward us.

There were the white oxen, already famed here in Roman days, sleek and slow, with as kindly an eye as ever was fastened in a socket. They are popular because they are stronger than a horse and when they can no longer work they can be eaten. These thrifty peasants find a dead horse a dead loss. Now oxen fetch and haul and plow. But in posting days they were seen at the foot of the post-road hills and, according to the grade, one or two were harnessed on to the diligences and carriages to help the horses lift them over the pass.

And there were the scarecrows, unlike any others

I had ever seen. They were portly effigies, well padded out, healthy, vigorous personages, and strung up so that with every gust of breeze they turned about and swung their arms; very lifelike to a predatory bird, but to me they carried an arresting suggestion of a recent lynching.

The restful darkness, the wind created by our swift advance, the soft purr of the engine, finally brought on a sleep from which we were awakened to find it was after midnight and we were at the door of our destination, somewhere in Siena.

In the morning this imprisoned city of the Tuscan hills, the city of St. Catherine and of the Palio, welcomed us as might an old friend, familiar and reassuring. There again were the tight little streets with their frowning early Renaissance palaces, stern yet timidly ornate, the first concession of fortress homes to an elegance still reticent. There, in its depression, was the semicircular Campo, that tilted piazza on whose rough flags the riders of the seventeen Sienese wards race their horses for the city's flag, the Palio. There were the façades made familiar by pens and pictures beyond counting, yet somehow all unobserved now in the presence of the slender tower of the Mangia which rises into the azure with all the grace of flight.

Up this labyrinthine town the streets unwound at its pinnacle into the presence of the Duomo, florid



with marbles and mosaics under the morning sun, a sometimes questioned masterpiece. Its vast and shadowy interior, however, satisfies those whom its façade does not, and no matter how many times one returns, it is to linger at nearly every step, but longest before the pulpit, that miraculous thirteenth-century product of the collaboration of five of Italy's greatest sculptors; before the statue of John the Baptist by Donatello; and to trace out those incomparable pavement pictures of *graffito*, delicate outlines etched in the marble, sealed with black stucco, and glowing softly with the patina of half a thousand years.

This much of Siena had been revisited at the price of rebellion. Mario had pleaded and practised speed once too often. His excuse for keeping out of Assisi was the pilgrim crowd, and crowds indeed are no part of the charm of these peaceful hills. At Perugia he had allowed us dinner and the vista and had so drugged our senses with a day of speed that we weakly let him urge us on. But when, after a refreshing night, and Siena to be reseen, he came and asked us to forego this third delight, our wills were stronger, and he was reminded that Siena was in our bond. He met this with feebly urged extenuation and ready compromise. He said his wife was sick, he must go on, he would clip the cost and in mercy proceed alone. Naturally every added day on the road with us kept him from another fare. That was

understood; but not the wife. After three days with Mario, the wife was deemed apocryphal. It was believable that he might lie, but not that he could crown his self-revelation en route with a wife at the end.

At Terni, where he first presented himself, he had left a lady at another table to come and introduce his business. Next morning she was at the car's side to part with him a little tearfully.

Something of the same sort was repeated at Spoleto. Upon entering the Cathedral we had left a lively world outside. When we returned to it the city had completely changed. Doors and windows everywhere were closed. Not an individual was seen in the streets. Not a footstep broke the silence. It was as if a plague had driven every inhabitant out and left a white, sunbaked, deserted, leprous town. It was not the plague, however, it was only *pranzo*. The noon-time angelus had rung. Every one had gone in to the midday dinner and siesta, and we had the town exclusively to ourselves. When such a town shuts up, it shuts up tight. Shops were closed, wooden shutters were up, metal saracinescas were down, the empty ways were flanked only by sealed houses. Perhaps this would not have been worth mentioning, since it is the daily characteristic of every Italian town, were it not for the fact that since the deserted streets were left to strangers only, it seemed

as if Mario might be, as we were, isolated and easy to find. His mild self-effacement was agreeable some hours before, and now the noon-time closing-up seemed not to have left him outside. At the moment that his absence had become an enigma, however, the reason for it appeared by his side in the deep shadowy recess of an archway, another girl.

He surprised us again with his tenderness at Foligno. But after he had repeatedly proved himself equally at home at each succeeding stop, whether at a roadside *osteria* or inside the towns, we accepted him in his character as Tuscan sheik.

Secretly we admired and envied him. But the memory of his past performances discounted the urgency of his rushing forward to minister to an ailing wife. Hence our rebellion. He got his cash and we our freedom to linger a little with our old innamorata, Siena. I doubted our judgment of our philanthropic friend at first, and might have continued to, had we not later caught sight of him driving away toward the Porta Camollia. Whatever urge of husbandly duty there may have been in his heart, in the seat at his side was another girl.

So with bags sent forward by train, according to the convenient Italian method which requires no ticket for them, we found ourselves on the road again, finishing on foot this holiday begun on foot. And the end of the first lap was the village of Colle di Val

d'Elsa. This modest hamlet was the home of the great Arnolfo di Cambio, architect and sculptor, who designed the Duomo, built the Palazzo Vecchio, enlarged Santa Croce and designed and built its first cloister, all in Florence; one of the famous five to immortalize themselves in the Cathedral pulpit in Siena; and in other great works left his autograph in stone in many parts of Tuscany.

Colle would seem to have done its part in giving Cambio to the world. But Colle carries on. It still gives an humbler but a better known gift to the world, for here is made the fiasco, that round bulbous bottle with the long slender neck, which, coated in straw and decorated with its knotted cords of red and green and blue, is familiar on every table where one finds Chianti. And what more appropriate place for such a fabrication, since lifting one's eyes to the east, they here look upon the vine-clad hills whose red blood carries their name wherever wine is sipped, the Monti Chianti.

On the road again, in that quiet and peace which come where no railway goes, amid the sober beauty of fields and orchards and vineyards, of highways and lanes where man and beast walk untroubled, we agreed that neither train nor motor-car permits the intimacy and understanding and sense of traveling in a country instead of merely over it that comes to one afoot. Is it that a pause after the speed of motoring

leaves one with an inner something still spinning and speeding? Is it that the unrelenting sense of rush compels one on so that one looks without seeing and without caring much, and objects in mere repose lose all significance? Even the waiting car, oiled and with gas-tank filled, but with quiescent pistons, appears to fret with a silent, grim, desperate, persuasion to be off. There is no kinship between one awheel and one afoot. But abandoning the car one is released, one seems to have joined again the brotherhood of these hills. Leisure returns, and with it the eyes and understanding open again, and the beauty and interest of men and things appeal once more. At least so it seemed to me as I walked out of Colle in the early morning.

The road soon accommodated itself to the hills in broad curves. Near horizons cupped a tiny world. There was a seclusion and a pastoral calm which made eventful the mere flight of a bird. Here seemed the world as it always had been, time uncalendared. Such detachment was a proper preparation of the mind and of the eye for passing through this green silent corridor at whose end the slopes separated and revealed the vision of the little town of San Gimignano.

One recognizes it instantly on its hill among hills. Its cluster of towers proclaims it. It can not be any other than San Gimignano of the beautiful towers, unique among all the towns of Italy.



Entering, one finds a medieval austerity in every street and opening. Beauty passed it by but stamped it, nevertheless, with a grim and noble distinction. Dante came here as an ambassador in 1300, and to-day he would be more at home in San Gimignano, for he would find it less changed, than anywhere else he knew. Much has disappeared that once stood here, but, as nothing has been made new, it is only the old that remains. Like Carcassonne, it transports one back to its beginning.

The exterior of the museum and of the churches give no hint that within are some of the finest flames of color that the Italian masters translated into story. One visits them and rejoices in them and forgets them. Indeed, of San Gimignano one remembers only its strange inscrutable towers.

Once some one spoke of San Gimignano's "forest of towers." At the time that Dante saw them there were seventy-six. But above the pink tiles of this little town of only thirty-three hundred souls now rise only thirteen surviving towers. There are in all, to be sure, some traces of thirty-seven.

Perhaps the other towers, those which have disappeared, were beautiful. The remnant is hardly that. The survivals are square, made of unadorned travertine blocks, though sometimes of brick or of both; but they are without decoration; without those graceful windows which elsewhere pierce the campaniles, every opening an exquisite architectural epi-

gram; and without even the decorative cornice which so often crowns other towers with the delicacy of a diadem.

They do not rise in a conventional cincture protecting a girdle of walls. Such walls as San Gimignano may ever have had are gone, and the towers, instead of rising on the line of its circumference, cluster at its center.

Their position suggests a sullen and ferocious age. If they stood at the circumference of the little city one could envisage the townsmen standing shoulder to shoulder to protect themselves, their wives and children and homes, from aggression from without. Standing where they do each above its own palace, they can but suggest the terrible period of bloody feuds, family warring against family, house against house, neighbor against neighbor, destroying each other with murderous engines.

A suggestive survival is this obscure and aloof San Gimignano. Not least suggestive at night, even when the moon rides the sky, for the towers hide its face and darken the narrow empty streets with shadows. Then the sound of one's own heel on the cobbles seems a signal to an unseen enemy. One feels the imminence of intrigue and ambushade and sinister attacks, as if at the next moment the silence might be broken by the rattle of armor, the clash of steel, the crash of shields and broadswords.



*Photo by Alinari*

The Many Towered Town of San Gimignano



*Photo by Alinari*

The Pretorian Palace in Certaldo, Boccaccio's Town

One leaves San Gimignano with relief and yet at the crest of the road over the last hill one looks back at the little cluster of towers with regret to turn away and make of such a picture a mere memory. However, in turning a fair and laughing picture is below and beyond. It is again the Val d'Elsa, the little valley of the Elsa River, and on its other side, on the lower hills, where the Chianti Mountains have begun to dip toward the plain through which the Arno flows, enthroned, sits Certaldo.

It is our last hill town and another of those which know few visitors. At its feet run the trains bound for Siena. But it rarely gets the tribute of more than a glance from a car window. Though it is made a little pictorial by its position, architecturally it has no boasts. Then why climb to its gates? The answer is Boccaccio.

Paris and Florence dispute with Certaldo as to where Boccaccio was born. This is certain, however, that his family was of Certaldo, that he spent much of his maturity there, that he died there, that he always signed his name Boccaccio da Certaldo, and that in his epitaph he named that town as his birthplace.

His name is the great and only plume in little Certaldo's modest bonnet. With becoming pride the citizens flaunt it. He was a part of his own age, and to it less wicked than to a Puritanized posterity. The



world knows him for a great artist, and Certaldo knew him as not a bad sort, and requited his love.

Byron, in his *Childe Harold*, fastened a phrase on Certaldo, for its alleged treatment of the deceased author of the *Decameron*, which has never ceased to nettle its savants:

“—Even his tomb  
Uptorn, must bear the hyæna bigot’s wrong,  
No more amidst the meaner dead find room,  
Nor claim a passing sigh, because it told for *whom*.”

For four hundred years the remains of the father of Italian prose were entombed in the center of the Cathedral. His great monument was erected there opposite the pulpit early in the sixteenth century. Boccaccio was represented half-length, holding on his breast with both hands a folio volume on which was written *Decameron*; “a singular book to be placed just facing a preacher, and a proof of liberality on the part of the clergy,” said M. Vallery, who saw the monument. This source writer, after another visit, said: “The tomb has experienced the most melancholy changes. For more than four centuries it had been the honour of Certaldo, and had attracted many travelers to the Canonica, when in 1783 it was removed by a false interpretation of the law of Leopold against burying in churches; the hyæna bigots of Certaldo, against whom Childe Harold and his annotator declaim, had nothing to do with it.”

For years Boccaccio's skull and bones were preserved by the rector of the Cathedral but their whereabouts have been veiled in mystery since that prelate's death. In 1823 Boccaccio's house was repaired and ever since has been dedicated to his souvenirs. There to-day one finds his fourteenth-century domestic environment recreated. There also are gathered the fragments of that monument which must have been hard facing for the Cathedral ecclesiastics.

Modest Certaldo makes at least one other artistic gesture. It is the Palazzo Pretorio, a simple Tuscan structure, with a stern and unrelenting façade which has been made to smile by reason of the decorations which succeeding generations have embedded there. These decorations are Certaldan coats-of-arms, in every sort of setting, placed without order or design or any correlation. The effect is of a plain and prim but consequential old lady who has been forced by friends to wear her medals and if they do not wholly obscure her, they take away her austere aspect.

It was Boccaccio who made us glad to come to Certaldo. It was *broccoli* that made us glad to leave; *broccoli*, that staple Italian green, whose feast is the octave or two between late spinach and early peas. From Narni all the way to Certaldo life reeked with *broccoli*. The gardens were green with it, and so were the carts and the market-stalls and the stools before doorways; it stalked forth from the kitchen

for every meal. Its great, coarse, green leaves and white stems came submerged in soup (*al brodo*); it came as a salad crisp and raw under oil and salt; it came scalded and limp as its honest vegetable self heaped in a huge inert mass under a lump of butter (*al burro*), to be unraveled like spaghetti and then, like spaghetti, to be spiraled round the fork for carrying to the mouth. A sound hearty dish is *broccoli*, taken in moderation, that is, taken in not more than two forms at every meal for a fortnight. The escape from it in its more virulent form softened our regret in leaving the lovely, infinitely varied, unforgettable hill towns.

## CHAPTER X

### MUSSOLINI'S HOME TOWN

ALONG THE VIA EMILIA IN ROMAGNA—FORLI—CESARE BORGIA AND CATERINA SFORZA—A RUSE THAT FAILED—MUSSOLINI'S PRISON—A VALLEY OF STRONG MEN—PREDAPPIO—HOUSE IN WHICH MUSSOLINI WAS BORN—HIS BOYHOOD DAYS—NEIGHBORING SCHOOLS—THE GIRL THE DUCE MARRIED—THE REJUVENATION OF DOVIA-PREDAPPIO

MUSSOLINI took me to Predappio. It was not a personally conducted trip. The Duce remained in Rome. The intent of the figure is to say that interest in Mussolini, inescapable in Italy or anywhere else at the time, gave the impulse to cross the Apennines and hunt out this village.

Having seen and heard Mussolini often, having lived under the influence of Fascism on Italy and its life for a part of every year for seven years, having read much of the extensive literature which has grown up about Italy's strong man, I have found nearly every question about him answered over and over again except the always interesting fact in the

development of a great figure: Where did he come from?

What he does and what he plans to do, where he is and what he says, are continually in the front of public consciousness. It was not, however, by mere casual inquiry that I learned that Mussolini was born and spent his boyhood in Predappio. It was not by casual inquiry that the location of Predappio was found. It does not show its modest name on the ordinary map. It is not on a railway, and so does not get even into the promiscuous company of a time-table. Nevertheless, Predappio has in Italy attained a kind of subdued celebrity as Mussolini's *paese*. There is no English equivalent of this word. In the sense of country, region, neighborhood, or birthplace, as distinguished from house and hearth, it is very nearly the equivalent of our word "home."

One can not have failed to observe how much oftener Mussolini refers to the Roman rather than the Italian State, how insistent he is on his Roman past and how frequently he prophesies a new Roman Empire. In a word, Mussolini seems idealistically more Roman than Italian. Yet he was not born in Rome, nor did he reach there until maturity; but he has nevertheless a Roman heritage of a kind: he is nominally a Roman by birth, for he comes from the only district, except that within the capital's walls, which gives any kind of right to its citizens to call



themselves Romans. He was born in Predappio, and Predappio is in Romagna, and Romagna is the detached and remote survival of the larger Romagna which, including the city of Rome, once belted all Central Italy.

Romagna is the district in the southern corner of the great and ancient province of Emilia, the triangle made by the Apennines, the Adriatic and the Po. The Via Emilia gave it its name. The road plumbs its paved way straight from Piacenza to Rimini through the heart of Parma, Bologna, Faenza and Forli, paralleled by the steel highway of our nineteenth century, which, however, touches only the edges of these same towns. The Po, serpentine through the low country between Piacenza and the Adriatic, somehow achieves an ultimate straight line east from that city to the coast, at a point about twenty-five miles south of Venice. In the corner of this triangle, in the province called Romagna, are Ravenna and Rimini, which arouse memories, however indefinite, to all the world, and Forli which arouses none. Yet it is Forli one must find in order to find Predappio.

One enters Forli with the same monotonous identity of approach as in approaching every other city along the Via Emilia. The train halts in the flat, fertile, yet treeless plain northeast of the city. There is a dusty drive of a fraction of a mile southwest into

the city. The city, itself as flat as a fleet moored in quiet waters, is backed by the Apennines tumbling off behind it, just as at Parma, Modena, Bologna and Faenza. At Forli, however, the background of mountains comes a little closer.

Inside the city there is, too, a certain identity in principal thoroughfare with the other Emilian cities, for, in each of them, straight as an arrow it pierces from northwest to southeast. It is in every case a segment of the Via Emilia. When the Romans built a road they seem always to have built it on the economical principle that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, and they allowed nothing to deflect them to one side or the other. One could believe that were it possible to stretch a cord taut through the center of the Via Felice Cavallotti in Piacenza down the one hundred and sixty miles to the center of the Piazza Giulio Cesare in Rimini it would bisect the road all the way and perfectly divide the traffic there and in the principal thoroughfare of every city on the route. On either side of this direct artery the streets curve and coil, compressed by the city walls, and at the two points where the city walls cross the Via Emilia there are always the two main city gates. There the identity among the Emilian cities ends.

Life in Forli considered in the large, that is to say from its foundation by the Livy who gave it its

name (*Forum Livii* now compressed to *Forli*), has been exciting to its inhabitants, as warfare, even when intermittent, is apt to be. Perhaps the most tragically comic fact is, however, wrapped up in the arrival of Cesare Borgia. He came to Romagna with an army to give battle and capture it for his father, Pope Alexander VI. The people, oppressed by their tyrants, welcomed any change, and so they came out from city after city and welcomed the Borgia. But, though the people of Forli were of that mind, their mistress, Caterina Sforza, was of another. She held the castle, locked up herself and her retainers there, and withstood more than three weeks of siege by the Borgia.

Once, however, coming to the edge of the moat for a parley, Cesare nearly fell a victim to her treachery. Caterina descended from the ramparts and ordered the drawbridge down. Advancing upon it, she invited him to meet her half-way, so that they might parley better. But the castellan was too eager to obey her instructions which were that the moment Borgia stepped upon the bridge it was to be drawn up, thus tumbling the Duke into the castle, their prisoner. Borgia had put but one foot on the bridge when the winches began to labor and it began suddenly to rise. He stepped back and the too eager trapper lost her game. The chronicler should have described how the haughty and designing Caterina

retreated. Did she slide gently down the incline, or was she roughly catapulted back into her citadel?

To-day Forli leads the peaceful life of a market town, the center of rich fields. Few people come to see its treasures; it seems to take them rather casually itself. The graceful campanile of San Mercuriale, a treble rhapsody in pink brick, is to them just a bell-tower which signals them to mass. Inside this church the *Enthroned Madonna* and the *Immaculate Conception*, both by Palmezzano of Forli, after four hundred years still perform their simple and original office of inspiring the people to piety. Passing in and out the devout notice without noting the quaint figures of the *Adoration of the Magi* set in the lunette above the main door. In the church of San Biagio a marvelous *Madonna* by Guido Reni is just another call to prayer; and one wonders with what impressions these people spend their daily lives close to such an exquisite object as the tomb of Barbara Manfredi chiseled by Francesco di Simone da Fiesole. Their museum has pictures which would enrich any collection, but the stranger will stop longest perhaps before Lorenzo di Credi's portrait of Caterina Sforza and try to imagine so gentle a being venturing such desperate chances as did she in her castle of Forli.

The mention of such and similar names leave the Forlians calm and unruffled, but to speak of Mussolini is to touch the nerve center of their pride. For the

moment one may forget that he belongs less to Forlì than to Predappio nine miles beyond, and it is better to get on toward the hills.

The way to Predappio is down the curving Borgo Ravaldino and out of the gate near the castle which, though Cesare Borgia took it traditionally, remains always Caterina Sforza's. Four-square it stands, cornered with low round towers, and the grass grows in its broad moats, which to-day invite, instead of prevent, approach to the walls. The walls have, since the civil wars, been pierced with occasional windows; but they are heavily barred, for now the castle is a prison, and here both the Mussolinis, each in his youth, were once political prisoners.

The first rises of the mountains tilt the fields ever so gently. The peasants look all that one hears of them; stocky and sturdy, square of jaw, and dark and direct of eye. They have always been revolutionists, accustomed to resent political and economic hardships, bold to demand relief, and quick to go out and fight for it if it does not come as quickly as they think it should. The very earth is firm and black. Vineyards and orchards rim the city; farther out the vines and trees leave the land to grain; and then, as the road climbs up the valley of the little Rabbi River, and the currents speed with the rises, the waving grain shares the hillsides with grazing spaces, and higher up where no grain grows the pastures



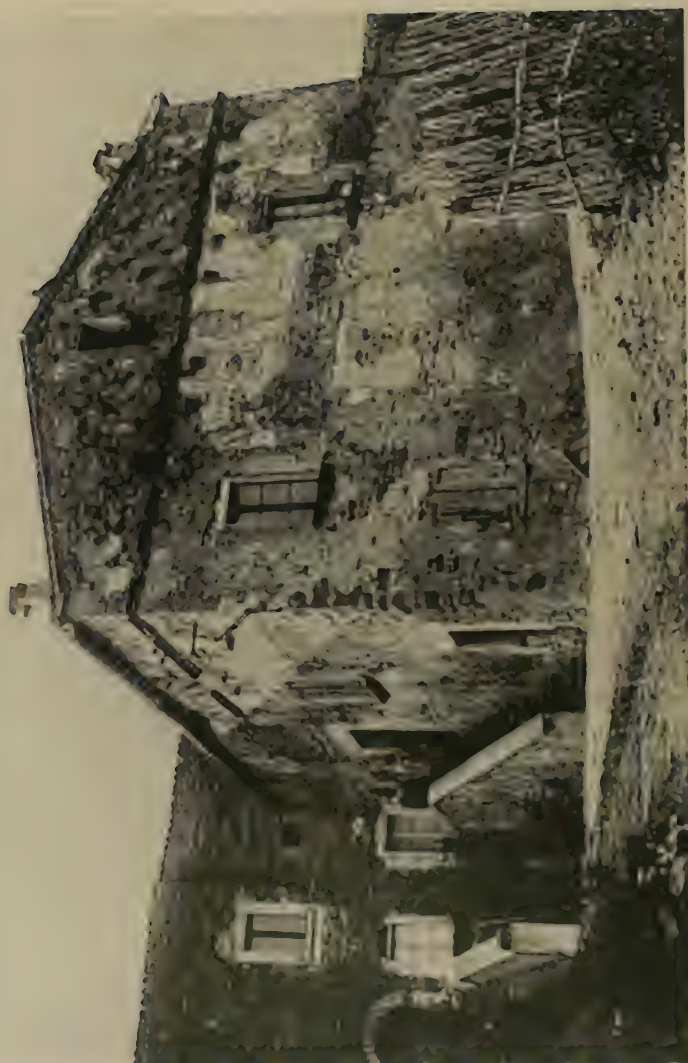
make green patches on inclines which are dark with raw mountain rock. But every inch of arable soil is made to yield for the land is not less stern than its discipline administered by the Romagnan peasants. And one feels this is, indeed, a corner which yields strong men.

Nearing the village of Predappio, which stood high above us on its castellated rock like a dried and dusty honeycomb, and which I had thought of only as a village, I was halted in the roadside village of Dovia and there had pointed out what was said to be the object of our visit. At first I declined to accept Dovia as a substitute for Predappio, and unworthily suspected the driver of wishing to avoid the climb. After some banter back and forth had cleared the situation, it appeared that the name Predappio attaches to a commune as well as to a village, that Dovia is what the Italians call a "fraction" of Predappio, and the information that Mussolini was born in Predappio refers to the commune of that name and not to the village.

Sure enough on the house represented as that in which Mussolini was born was a metal tablet which confirmed the claim. It is a poor, ragged and decayed block of masonry of two and a half stories under pink tiles mottled brown and green with moss and grass. Like most of the houses of the poor, it was built of rough stones just as they were gathered from



Forlì  
The Piazza and Campanile



*Photo by Enit*

### Pradappio

Benito Mussolini was born in the room, one flight up, behind the corner supporting the electric lamp

the hillsides and surfaced over with plaster. Time and neglect have, however, chipped off the plaster in most places, and damp has discolored the remnant, so that now, under sun and shadow, it has a varying coloring of blue and pink and gray and green which gives it, when not inspected too closely, the texture of an old rug. A literal eye, however, sees only the evidence of poverty and decay.

Giuseppe Lombini, a mason, who lives there now, came from his work in the road near by, and led us up the outside stairway to the second floor and there threw open the door and made us welcome. Turning immediately to the right inside the door, he led us into a corner room about fourteen feet square, and here he said Mussolini first saw light. Now the room seems a kind of kitchen. The floor was a dull red with hexagonal tiles. In the corner a built-in hearth held some glowing coals, and wherever the housewife was, her kettle was boiling gloriously. In the feeble light of a single window the inside of the old walls only repeated the impression of the outside. They were dark and bare except where spotted with a few portrait post-cards of the padrone's family and friends; a few colored prints; a string of cats which had strayed into the only frame; and, the single reminder of the man who gave the place distinction, an unframed charcoal drawing of the Duce.

Fame has already reached the place, but not yet



change. It was still obviously much the same as when Benito was born there on July 29, 1883, of a Sunday afternoon while the bells were ringing for the fête of the patron saint of the parish. His father, Alessandro Mussolini, was the village blacksmith and a tavern-keeper; his mother taught in the village school; but they were both people of character beyond their station, neither vulgar nor uncouth. Alessandro partook of the Romagnan virility which bred partisans and fighters, and became himself a socialist and an internationalist, and for his principles he served three years in prison while still a youth. On his father's death the son wrote in his diary: "Of worldly goods he has left nothing; of moral wealth he has left a treasure: the treasure of an idea." The mother has been represented as "a bundle of nerves controlled by an indomitable will and disguised beneath a tranquil and smiling countenance." She was a woman of extraordinary initiative and energy; a blend of the austere virtues, the neighbors said, which went into the making of a Roman matron of antiquity.

From the composite of these two characters one finds a definition and an explanation of the man who, reared in Romagnan setting and under Romagnan influences, has restored and revived Italy. But, rather strangely, the beginnings of great men are seen only in perspective, for no one takes account of them at the time.



The early days of Mussolini here in Predappio furnish only fragmentary facts, the most dependable of which perhaps are found in his own words. While a bersagliere in arms, during the war, in the winter of 1916-17, on Christmas Day, he wrote:

"Twenty-five years ago I was a violent, pugnacious youngster. Some of my contemporaries still carry on their heads the evidence of my assaults. By instinct a nomad, from morning till night I used to roam along the river valley, robbing nests and orchards.

"I went to mass. The Christmas of those days is still vivid in my memory. There were very few who didn't go to Christmas mass. Even my father and certain others.

"The trees and the hawthorn hedges along the way to Saint Cacciano were silvered and rigid under the frost. It was cold. The first masses were for the earliest risers among the old people. When we saw them coming out we knew it was our turn. I remember: I followed after my mother.

"In the church there were ever so many lights, and in the center of the altar, in a little crib decorated with flowers, lay the Holy Child born during the night. This was all picturesque and gratified my imagination. It was only the odor of the incense which so moved me that at times it gave me moments of insupportable distress. Finally a burst from the organ closed the ceremony. The crowd dispersed. Along the street there was pleasant gossip. On the table at noon we had the traditional and delightful Romagnan drinks. How many years, how many centuries have passed since then?"

There is a local tradition that in the boyhood which to him seems ages ago, Benito, with other young friends, was off down the valley on one of those marauding expeditions to which he confessed, during the season of ripe apples, when a certain tree heavy with the fruit attracted them. The boys were soon under the trees watching one of their number who had climbed aloft to shake down the apples. At that moment the proprietor arrived, with a gun, and let fire at the young pirate in the branches and brought him down, wounded in the leg. This was the signal for the crowd to scatter, and so they did, all but one. That one was Benito. He stood his ground, raised his wounded companion on to his own back and in the face of the astonished proprietor plodded off homeward with his load. The sequel to this tale, as told at Predappio, is that young Benito later made his young companions pay dearly for their cowardice.

Young Mussolini's first excursion out of the hills of his Predappian neighborhood was made in his ninth year. His father harnessed the donkey to the cart and with his son by his side they set out in a mid-October rain for Faenza, fifteen miles away to the north, where Benito was placed in the College of the Silesian Fathers. He had been diverted by the journey, but he recorded, in the fragmentary biography which he wrote years afterward, that when the door closed, he on the inside and his father moving away

from him on the outside, he broke into sobs, a prisoner for the first time. But he proved himself an obstinate little savage, and he made his way out of there by being expelled.

He may have hated discipline and restraint, but he did not really hate study. When he was at home, he used to go on foot the nine miles into Forli to luxuriate all day among the books of the library. Polemics were an early passion, but his pen often strayed off into poetry. The next time he went farther than Forli was to go to Forlimpopoli, a little town eastward on the Via Emilia. There he entered a normal school to prepare himself to be a teacher, of which experience Pini remarks dryly: "The exuberant personality and the vivacity of the student proved sufficiently disturbing to the poor professors."

In crowded Italy it is one thing to get a teacher's diploma and quite another thing to get a school. That was young Mussolini's dilemma, and in the emergency he sought to fill in as a clerk in the town hall. Had he received the post he would have been satisfied. For the refusal of it he has doubtless many times since been grateful.

These are commonplace facts enough and not worth remembering if they did not recall the advice and prophecy of his father. Angry at the town for refusing his son the appointment, he consoled his boy with these proud words of faith and revenge: "Get

out, get out of here, it's no place for you. Go into the world. One way or another, with or without Predappio, you are going to be the Crispi of tomorrow."

Finally he got a school, in the town of Gualtiere, on the Po near Parma, and when he left Predappio the sequence of his life there was broken. When he came back it was only so far as Forli. In this period he was a full-fledged socialist, his revolutionary father's own son, a condition which the father lived to see, though he died too early to see his prophecy fulfilled. Young Mussolini, for his opposition to the Libian War in 1910, was cast into prison and there remained five months, diverting himself by writing a treatise on John Huss and by studying Spanish. Now the castle of Caterina Sforza is pointed out as Mussolini's prison.

The elder Mussolini was, as indicated, an inn-keeper as well as a blacksmith. The forge was in the basement of his dwelling. The inn, or more properly the peasants' *osteria*, was on the outskirts of Forli. It was called *l'Agnello* (the Lamb). In this enterprise he had a partner, the widow Agostini, whose family were his old friends in Predappio. She had with her, to cook and serve the guests, her daughter Rachele, who had grown up, a sturdy farm lass. When Benito returned to Romagna and set up as editor in Forli one of his principal haunts was his

father's inn. He soon fell in love with the pretty waitress, and she, in spite of his father's warning to her, reciprocated, and cast her life with his.

This is the mysterious wife and mother of whom the world hears so little. Mussolini maintains an absolute divorce between his official and his family life. "I belong to all," he has said, "and he who belongs to all, belongs to none." But if the world does not understand, Donna Rachele does, and so, too, do the Italian wives. They do not seek to extend the influence of their marriages beyond the home. They are seldom business partners like the managing French wives, or pals and comrades like English and American wives. That is the point of view of the generation at least out of which grew the mother of Mussolini's four children. It is the point of view still of the men and women in the triangle "between the Po, the mountains and the sea," and it is to be observed that both the Duce and his wife are of this soil, both native Romagnans.

In 1912 Mussolini went to Milan to edit *Avanti*, a socialist journal, and during the next decade and a half he was nearly everywhere in Italy except at Predappio. With his pen he fought to bring Italy into the war against the Central Powers. With a musket in his hands he fought through that war in the trenches to make Italy victorious. After the war he fought with every force he could command to save



Italy from the internal political and economical ulcers which were destroying her. That fight and the issue of it are history.

Having put new life into all Italy it is not surprising that his own Predappio, especially his "fraction" of Dovia, reflects that revivification. Though the old Mussolini house remains, old Dovia seems on the verge of disappearing, smothered by improvements. Presently even he will scarcely recognize his own *paese*, the haunts he knew as home.

The village street is lined with new houses. The foundations of a handsome Romanesque church are rising out of the ground. The old schoolhouse where Mussolini's mother taught has given place to a pretentious town hall, since Dovia's reward for having given birth to the Duce is that it has been rechristened Nuovo Predappio and the seat of the administration of the commune is to be moved from the gray honeycomb on the hill down to the village by the Rabbi River.

Doubtless in all this may be seen the hand of the Duce, who directly or indirectly has made it easier for Predappio to improve. How thoroughly he still considers this neighborhood his home was shown when he bought a villa here so that his children might grow up in the same Romagnan hills which gave him strength. Here, while he is occupied at Rome, Signora Mussolini and the four children live nearly

the entire year round. This is the shrine of the living. He has another shrine in Predappio, a shrine of the dead, blooming perennially with his flowers, the grave of his mother.

But, on its side, the little commune's pride in its distinguished son is genuine and generous. The citizens are doing their part in a material as well as sentimental way.

No one comes to Predappio without feeling the dominating influence of the towered ruins of Caminate Castle a thousand feet above the valley road. For centuries it has been the haunt of the boys of the neighborhood, of truants escaping vigilant eyes, of adventurers climbing the frail high tower, of dreamers come to look down on Forli and the plain and the sea. Now legend is making of it the particular objective of Mussolini's childhood rambles, and as such Predappio has deemed it appropriate to restore it and make of it a museum of Mussolini memorials.

Predappio celebrated its fellow citizen's accession to power as the head of the Italian Government by another gesture of appreciation. The community is not rich, yet in a few weeks it subscribed the twenty thousand lire required and bought and presented to Mussolini the house in which his parents lived and in which he had been born. Perhaps that will save it from change. Perhaps, while the old disappears

around it and everywhere new buildings rise, its walls will be permitted to retain their suggestion of frayed and weathered tapestry; a souvenir of years of precious memory; a souvenir, too, of the sturdy poverty which gave him the sinews to fight his fight for Fascism.

## CHAPTER XI

### NIGHT AND DAY IN RIMINI

THE CITY OF PAOLO AND FRANCESCA—CROSSING THE RUBICON—SOUVENIRS OF THE CÆSARS—THE TEMPLE OF THE MALATESTA—UNDER THE CASTLE WALLS AT NIGHT—THE MARKET AT MORNING—FANS FOR HEATING—MIRACLE OF THE BROOD-MARE—IMPROVISED MARKET BASKETS—MUNICIPAL PRICE FIXING

WHO can hear the name of Rimini and not think of Paolo and Francesca? How few can hear the word Rimini and think of any one or any thing else than Paolo and Francesca? It seems as if all the world knows of Francesca da Rimini. It would seem as if few beyond Italy know anything of Rimini. For many the word passes for the family name of Francesca instead of the town where her tragedy was first played in the terrible actuality of her own experience.

Dante was the first to give her story currency. To the poet the incident was something almost personal. A nephew of the unfortunate Francesca was Guido Novello da Polenta, Lord of Ravenna, and the friend

and protector of Dante in his old age. Dante spent the last four years of his life in her nephew's house and died there. It is not quite probable that he had known her when as a girl the misshapen Giovanni Malatesta took her as his bride to Rimini, or that he knew Giovanni's handsome brother Paolo, who shared Francesca's love and met death by her side at the hand of the elder Malatesta. But at least it is possible that he had the story of Francesca and Paolo from her nephew's own lips.

From the Romagna the story has spread everywhere. It has been the inspiration of other poets, of novelists and of dramatists and actors in all the theaters of the world. There has been scarcely less universal sympathy for the real history of Francesca and Paolo of Rimini, than for the beautiful fiction of those other celebrated lovers, Romeo and Juliet of Verona.

Naturally one comes to Rimini imbued with an eagerness to see the haunts of Francesca, to have pointed out the ugly Malatesta's house and perhaps to be shown a garden as the setting for the lovers' fatal reading of the story of Launcelot, the day they read of how his lips met the Queen's, the day their lips met—and they “read no more.” But there is no more a memento of her having once lived than it her whole story had been merely the poet's fancy.

The road from Forli, especially beyond Forlim-



popoli, to Rimini kept me in a state of exhilarating curiosity and indecision. It crosses seventeen little rivers of which three at least are of consuming interest, for not all the learning of the ages has decided which one from among them Julius Cæsar crossed when he crossed the Rubicon. The distinction of having been the Rubicon is claimed for the Pisciatello south of Cesena, for the Fiumicino at Savignano, and for the Uso which flows through Sant' Arcangelo. On some maps the word Rubicon is, indeed, bracketed after the word Pisciatello. But certainty wags its head and refuses to choose definitely among the three. Here, in this little angle of Romagna, at least, Cæsar, camped with his legions outside Ariminum (known to-day as Rimini), made and acted on his decision to cross the river called Rubicon and march on Rome. So, strangely, he immortalized a stream whose identity is lost.

Somewhere, there we, too, crossed the Rubicon, from the same direction, and rode into Rimini over the five white marble arches of the bridge thrown across the Marecchia, anciently the Ariminus, by Cæsar Augustus.

This way, too, down the Via Emilia, Francesca came a bride. She knew this bridge. But nothing else in Rimini now would she recognize except, where the Via Emilia leaves the town, the triumphal arch of that same Augustus, which is larger even than the

arches in Rome. Singularly, this city of Francesca and the Cæsars retains these evidences of the visiting lords of twenty centuries ago, but none at all of its own lady, who survives only in verses and paintings and in the vanishing presentments of the theater.

The monuments here, other than those of the Cæsars, date from another and later Malatesta, great Sigismondo, who attracted scholars and painters to his court and thereby actually achieved a kind of immortality for himself and for his mistress-wife, Isotta. They are the Church of San Francesco and the Malatesta Castle fortress, both of the fifteenth century.

This church is oftener called the Temple of the Malatestas. The noble patron can not have deluded himself that he was building for the glory of God. It reeks of the glorification of his ambitious self. The pictures are of his patron and of himself; the splendid tombs are for himself and Isotta and his ancestors; and attached to everything, etched and carved and painted without end, are Sigismondo's elephant and Isotta's rose. It is indeed a place of much splendor, inside and out, but with what nice distinction did the Malatesta cause himself and his bride to be buried inside the temple, and outside of it, under the arches of the classic flank, the men of genius whom it pleased him to patronize.

By day at least the whole pulse of life in Rimini is



*Photo by Brogi*

## Rimini

The Castle of the Malatestas, now a prison



*Photo by B. J. ...*

### Rimini

The Gate of Augustus which has been standing since the year 27 B.C.

modern. Sigismondo and his Isotta, two centuries nearer than Francesca and Paolo, seem as vaguely remote as they, in spite of his temple. At night, however, the utter darkness off from the indifferently lighted Corso permits the imagination some scope, as I found, on going out to ramble in the byways, only a hundred yards or so from the hotel, which all but angled on the truly vast piazza which is split in two by the theater.

It was in being attracted by the billing before the theater and noting the impressive double-tiered colonnade, that I slipped along its side, to have some idea of its depth, and found myself suddenly at the mysterious opening to the other half of the piazza. It was a very devil's pocket for darkness. The shadows fell so thick I scarce could find my way. In all its length only two feeble electric bulbs stabbed without opening the black vacuum. It was moments before the iris expanded and the eye had any perception even of the shadowy forms. Then, just opposite, a great dark hulk detached itself and raised a little way toward the dull blue-black sky a broken silhouette which suggested stumps, at least, of towers. It was the massive remnant of the Malatesta Castle.

Approaching it across the cobbles I scarcely heard my own footsteps. But I was conscious, and a little apprehensive, of the occasional figures which stole out of the black apertures between the buildings on



either side of the square. One youth, his black clothes a part of the night, seemingly shod with velvet, was upon me with the suddenness of an apparition. As he passed, his pale face came out a little in contrast with his black hair. He needed but hose and doublet and mantle to have been completely a contemporary of the early Malatestas, and in the instant before he had disappeared, I felt the ease with which he might have handled knife or sword. But the darkness swallowed him again suddenly, as suddenly as my groundless apprehension. Yet my curiosity followed him. He may have been a life-saver from the seaside, for Rimini is only a pleasant walk from the Adriatic shore; or a student, or a bar-boy from a near-by *trattoria*.

Other shadows moved slowly and silently through the darkness. With Dante recently in mind they recalled wraiths moving through the pit of Purgatory. Two such nebulous figures came up from behind me and passed on the right and moved ahead toward the black bulwark at the piazza's end. I followed at a little distance. At its center a small arch was dimly outlined by a concealed lamp of scarcely more than a single candle's power. The two figures, formless under their shawls, for they were women, advanced to the arch, and one of them raised her hand to the door that centered it. A bell jingled a distant dejected answer somewhere inside the walls. They

waited motionless and silent. Nothing else happened for what seemed a long time. Then another jingling, but this time not the bell. It was nearer and harsher, like a chain dropped. I heard a creaking as if a door were turning on rusty resentful hinges; but saw nothing. There was a low whispered parley between the seen and the unseen. The women explained, and were answered, and moved from left to right. There a panel opened, and so did their shawls. Through the panel they passed something very like a fiasco of wine and a bowl wrapped in paper or, perhaps, a napkin. Another whispered moment, doubtless involving a name. Then the panel snapped back, the inner door and the chains repeated their dreary ritual, and the women turned and glided out of the spot of light and, so far as I saw, into oblivion.

Turning away I found at a corner twin carabinieri, and politely, with none of the grimness of crime stalkers, they explained that the fortress is now a prison, and I understood the women's errand. I looked back again. Not a soul was in sight, not a light, except the pale taper under the arch. Not a sound broke the solid silence. I waited another moment, involuntarily, somewhat rooted to the spot, prepared for any romance or deviltry, for it seemed as if love, rapine and murder must stalk naturally in the Rimini night.

The livest place in Rimini at night is the Piazza

Giulio Cesare (the Square of Julius Cæsar), which is little more than a momentary widening of the Via Emilia in its through-town flight as the Corso d'Augusto. But it, too, is dull enough, except at about half-way its length where two rival *pasticcerie* (sweet-shops) have built up temporary platforms, each before its own door. They are as like as twins, each about thirty feet square, with a dozen tiny tables surrounded by chairs, and lighted by tall electric standing-lamps draped with gauzy silks of many colors. From a distance they looked like merry-go-rounds. We took a table at one of them and a sample of their offering of ices, liqueurs and coffee. But there was a timidity among the patrons to speak above a whisper, and as mere light and color have no effect on silence, I went to bed with a fixed impression of the dullness of Rimini after dark.

The morning brought its own surprise. I set out to review some of the sights of the day before, but got no farther than the same Square of Julius Cæsar. One could scarcely imagine a more animated scene than it presented under the bright sun. From one end to the other it was crowded with rows of tents and booths, carts and stalls and tables on trestles, all under gay canopies. The canopies were mostly white and very clean, but some were tan and the fancier padrones uniformly painted their woodwork a gay light green. The venders who had none

of these fineries spread their wares on the pavement and squatted themselves behind them under vast umbrellas. The rows were set off in good order so that there were miniature streets and cross-alleys to reach every section quickly.

To the eye there was not much movement. A shopper who was, like the purveyor, first of all a bargainer, remained a long time on one spot in the process of purchasing. To the ear, however, this market was as lively as several hundred clattering tongues could make it.

Gild-like the venders of each class of merchandise herded together, so that in one place were all the dealers in hardware and in another place all the dealers in notions. Similarly there was one group where one found all the vegetables, another for cheese, or for bread, or fish or meat or *pasta* or flowers.

Nearly all the imperishables were ranged on the south side of the piazza, on the site of the feebly ambitious cafés of the night before. Here were venders of rough work-clothes for men, of caps more worthless than they were cheap, and of heavy spiked shoes, of cravats and sashes and kerchiefs and belts and tiny suspenders which yet were long enough to go over the shoulders from waist-line to waist-line of the arm-pit-high Italian trousers.

Here, too, were the heaps and tiers and layers and festoons of cheap necessities and finery for the

women: laces for unmentionables, calicoes and cottons, checkered goods and gaily embroidered kerchiefs, magenta, purple, yellow, pink, and green, to set off the black hair and olive skins and brown eyes of the robust Romagnans.

On the same side was an unsheltered cart lustrous with gleaming new tinware, which reflected the sunshine as radiantly as the armor of the Roman legions when they passed down this identical street. Just next was a booth full of earthenware, amphoras and casseroles of red clay, wooden spoons and scoops of all kinds and sizes, and rat traps. Near by, was the canopied stall of a tinker who renewed umbrellas and sharpened knives and mended tin and copper utensils, when he wasn't selling the natively manufactured pitchforks and scythes and sickles and whetstones and stout triangular spades.

Between these two a stoutish woman sat on the pavement, her knees up and her forehead pillowed on them, dozing. About her in a semicircular pattern were spread rows of gray goose-feather fans each over a foot square. She and her environment composed, without any exaggeration, the caricature of a spread-tail turkey-buzzard. She roused up as I paused before her and, to my inquiry, surprised me with the statement that the fans were not for cooling but for heating. They were in fact part of the kitchen furnishings, and were used to blow the kitchen fire, and



so were an easily fabricated substitute for bellows. She was possessed that I should buy one of her fans, for no other apparent reason than because I had inquired about it, whatever she may have thought I would do with it. However, I invested a few lire to her satisfaction, and soon after doubled my own in the pleasure which the present of the object gave to an oldish little girl who was made pathetically though unconsciously conspicuous by a face of thirty years on a body of ten.

Last of all on this side, the side of the imperishables, was the wood market. No carts or canopies here. The merchandise lay in heaps in the open. There were small bundles of coarse faggots, and there were great bundles of brush twigs, destined to become brooms and brushes, very brown and very fine, each pair of them about six times as big as the donkey which had brought them down out of the hills. Here, too, were great sheaves of bamboo, ten to twelve feet long. These were for the *vignaioli*, the vine-dressers, who took them back to their vineyards and laid them end to end from the branches of one elm or fruit tree to the branches of another, for the vines to cling to with their green tendrils and later to festoon with their white and purple grapes. In the background here a train of donkeys huddled in a patch of shade facing alternately in opposite directions so that the tail of each swished the flies from its

own flank and its neighbor's face, as they waited patiently to be loaded with the remnant of the day's sale in order to carry it back for another market-day.

On the other side of the narrow piazza were the perishable goods. The meat, and the fish fresh from the near-by sea, were wisely installed under the colonnades away from the sun. They lay on great marble slabs washed by a continual flow of water which made everything appear cool and clean.

The flower market bloomed in a wide semicircle before a small octagonal building, merely a good-sized kiosk but an architectural gem, which one of the venders said was the *Tempietto di Sant' Antonio* (the Little Temple of Saint Anthony). Here, it seems, this saint preached to the people of Rimini, and, their descendants in the market will tell you, when they refused to heed him, he performed "the miracle of the brood-mare," explaining gravely that that animal, having fasted a long time, refused food that was offered it, but piously knelt in the presence of the Sacrament. Rimini has elsewhere another souvenir of their holy neighbor from Padua in another little chapel on the banks of the canal built to mark the spot where, its citizens having refused to listen to his sermons, the saint went and preached to the fishes.

A few yards beyond the *Tempietto* is a chipped and battered pedestal erected by Sigismondo to com-

memorate Cæsar's crossing of the Rubicon. At the moment I saw it its base served as the seat and shop of the oldest creature I think I have ever seen. About her was a mysterious medley of little cloth bundles which had no meaning until a purchaser appeared. Then the withered old creature stirred herself and untied the cloths one by one and as she spread them out they revealed little cones of seeds and beans and hulled nuts and scraps of savory roots and spices, and strange brown and yellow and red things for all sorts of purposes from appetizing a soup to planting a garden. Singular, it seemed, that this old woman, possibly a centenarian, about to leave life, should traffick in these particles in which were locked the beginning of life.

The liveliest groups and the liveliest colors were found about the vegetable venders. Here were greens in every shade; purple artichokes and white fennel; the great coarse-podded peas which the poorer Italians eat for dessert; golden pyramids of oranges; mounds of yellow lemons; cheerful pink radishes, very slender but very long, some extending ten inches from their green tops; blushing red beets; great, coarse, firm, splendid, white cauliflower; green onions, and onions in tight dried pinkish jackets; baskets and trays heaped with tiny new potatoes, no bigger than walnuts, some tan and some a delicate, soft, cinnamon color.

The women who sold eggs sat cross-legged on the pavement and in their deep laps held the delicate ecru ovals. Their sisters did a noisier traffic in pigeons and chickens and geese, which cackled and fluttered a frightened protest as they were held up for inspection.

On this side were the Rimini housewives, bonnetless mostly, their heads covered generally with folded black kerchiefs, giving way occasionally to green or purple or pink, but all lusty solid tones. Here was a babel of bargaining, woman against woman, expert against expert; the hawking of goods by raucous voices which seemed to omit all the sweet Italian vowels, and concentrated on savage consonants. These women, for the most part, when they opened their mouths, showed rather less economy in words and shouts than in teeth which, such as they were, seemed unsociable and generally stood alone. Every price seemed too big and every counter offer too small. In the give and take of it there were all the accents of proffer and protest, despair and grudging yielding on both sides. To the gabble of bargaining was added the rattle of chains and the tossing of weights into great brass pans as the scales were held up and a balance was adjusted to the fraction of a leaf or seed.

The women rarely carried baskets. They spread a head kerchief or a fringed shoulder shawl, heaped

their purchases on it, and tied the opposite corners together, but loosely enough to slip a forearm under the upper knot for carriage. And an excellent practical carrier it is, light and adjustable, disappearing and unencumbering when not in use.

The calmest place in the square was among the booths where bread, *pasta*, cheese and butter were sold. There was no haggling here, as among the notions and laces and hardware and vegetables and flowers. Here trade was just as brisk and yet a kind of silence reigned. The reason was soon apparent. The municipality fixes the cost of these commodities from day to day, and over each booth are carded the prices current. Thus the law eliminated argument.

Here, too, was the clean fragrance of fresh cheese and crisp newly-baked breads. There were two basic varieties of bread according to the price list: *pane commune*, (coarse bread) at 2.30 lire the kilogram, and *pane di lusso* (fine bread) at 2.60 lire the kilogram. But in the latter class were all sorts of tempting sizes and shapes with fluent Italian names. One pretty vendress enumerated, while I spelled and wrote them down: *cressa*, *spianata*, *marsigliese*, and *viennese*.

Of cheese there was infinite variety, dominated of course by the national essential, *parmigiano*, the great, black, oily-surfaced cakes from Parma, one of them in its original form taxing a man to lift it. But



here they were broken up into all sizes and weights, to be carried off and grated into pale buff powder and sprinkled over soup and vegetables, over *risotta* and *ravioli*, over fried eggs and over every form of *pasta* from delicate vermicelli to coarse macaroni, hearts and flowers, butterflies and shells, and all the fanciful shapes the Italians make of flour and water. Near the Parmesan cheese were properly the red tins of varying sizes suggesting the red *conserva di pomodoro* (tomato preserves) inside, that sauce which crimsons nearly every plate of *pasta*.

The butter and the fresh cream cheese came in crisp white paper, and so, too, did the *margarina* in its soft rolls, eight inches long and two inches thick, from Albania across the way. In the same booths were creamy Gorgonzola, marbled green; *sugarpino* from Turin, in square cakes from which the purchases were sliced; and the round flat cakes of *bel paese* from Lombardy.

This *bel paese* is my favorite of all cheese and at the sight of so many sliced cakes exposing their cool creamy interiors I was overtaken with an unseasonable hunger. I went to a bread booth and invested twenty centesimi in a crisp roll and returning to a cheese monger I asked for a slice of good *bel paese*. He tried to give me the worth of a lira but he couldn't cut to the scale. His way of solving his dilemma was to heap the whole of his cutting into my bread and to

refuse the lira entirely, with his elbows in his ribs and his hands raised palms outward, in a gesture which said more eloquently than words that any other solution was impossible.

This would have suggested a drink, to season the courtesy, even if the corpulent sandwich had not, and he accepted my invitation to the nearest café with a cheerful dignity, leaving his sister in charge of his stand. At the metal table, sitting over our beer, he first fixed my point of origin and then said he had a cousin in Connecticut and longed himself to go to America, the universal yearning in Europe at the time. Thereupon he helped himself to a language lesson and enriched himself with a few words of English agreeably mispronounced, for which he exchanged some Italian which on my tongue must have sounded equally strange to him.

When the clock-tower sounded the noon hour the market men and women folded up their awnings, struck their tables, stowed their goods in carts and on donkeys, and in an incredibly few minutes the piazza was left to two sweepers whose brooms of brown twigs soon had the place tidy. Then it remained silent and dull again until dark brought out the tables and chairs and lights and silk draperies of the platforms of the rival sweet-shops—and was then scarcely less dull.

The market, while it lasted, had been a surprising

and exhilarating experience. Its color and noise and impermanence had something of the character of a small circus. I wanted to see it come into being again in the early morning, and intended to be up next morning in time to see it. But I overslept, and it was my last day in the city of Francesca.

What other surprises might Rimini have turned up had I remained was left to conjecture. I departed feeling that it was quite a magical little city, resourceful in souvenirs of several ages even to the very remote, rich in moods, and withal living the life of to-day in a practical and cheerful, though somewhat overquiet, fashion.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SMALLEST REPUBLIC IN THE WORLD

SAN MARINO—THE THREE PENS ON THE PERPENDICULAR ROCK—TWO AMERICAN PRESIDENTS ALONE IN AN ART GALLERY—AN ACTUAL POOH-BAH—SOUVENIRS OF GARIBALDI—WHEN LIBERTY WAS FIRST PLANTED HERE—THE TRIUMPH OVER CARDINAL ALBERONI—SAN MARINO AND ANDORRA—REPUBLICAN MACHINERY—ELECTING THE CAPTAINS-REGENT—IMPORTING JUDGES AND DOCTORS—ITALY'S EMBARRASSING KINDNESS—AT THE APEX OF THE REPUBLIC

A GREAT rock crowned by the lofty turrets of three castellated towers soon engages the eye of any one roaming about Romagna, and holds it as long as he remains on that triangular plain. This rock standing high and well forward from the mass of the Apennines may be visible almost anywhere between Forli and Rimini, and as far east as the Adriatic.

I missed the thrill given one who looks up to it from the plain and, in reply to a casual inquiry, is told that it is Mount Titano, and that the mountain and its limited base is the republic of San Marino, the

oldest and smallest republic in the world, and unique among independent territories in that it exists wholly within the confines of another state. Although I missed the actual exhilaration given by the receipt of this information on the spot, for a visit to San Marino was one of my purposes in coming to Romagna, I had it vicariously in the faces and voices of two English ladies whose entire expectation of coming here had, up to that moment, centered in the mosaics of Ravenna and the sea bathing near Rimini. Promptly we engaged to go together from Francesca's city, on the third day ahead. But for some good reason, that never reached me, their places in the motor-bus remained unoccupied.

Seeing me seated alone, a bundle of old clothes, huddled in the shade of the maples where we stood on the edge of the Piazza Malatesta, shook itself erect and revealed itself as the container of a human being. There was nothing of him visible but his head, but that distinguished him as having only one ear and a half. He shuffled over to the car and presented a little yellow hand-bill which announced the "Garibaldi Restaurant, annexed to the ancient historical café which gave shelter to the Hero after his epic retreat from Rome." It further promised "the best and healthiest home cooking, excellent wines to be taken with your *pasta*, board at moderate prices," and concluded, with the emphasis given by an index finger



pointing to it from each end: "Note the number, so as not to confuse it with other places."

The ear-and-a-half came back again to say: "Very good place. Nothing like it in San Marino." He presented himself a third time and, in quite a confidential manner, as if by now we were old friends and he owed me his entire confidence, he assured me: "Nothing else in San Marino equals the Garibaldi. Do not listen to others. Do not be deceived. I tell you the truth." Just as the engine began to churn itself warm he sidled up again and with accented intimacy and just a trace of an ingratiating plea, he whispered: "Tell the padrone I sent you. Be sure and tell him that *I* sent you, and you will eat well. Good voyage. Good appetite. Till we meet again." And the departing motor put a period to his further attentions.

The purple apex of the little republic was visible for a moment as we took the road outside the city and then disappeared behind the nearer hills as the car rolled south and west over sweeps green with fields of grain and fruit and vines, nearly all of them hemmed with hedges of white bloom. When it came again into view it rose above us a perpendicular amethyst just as we rose to the first highlands which are the republic. A stone marks the international boundary but it was easily overlooked. We knew we were in San Marino only a moment after the fact

when we reached the village of Serravalle and halted before a blue and white inn and saw by the sign that it was the Caffè Republica. It was noticeable, too, that the red, white and green colors of the Kingdom of Italy were replaced by the blue and white in the banner of the republic.

On this flag is stamped a crowned heart. The crown over a republic is not quite explicable. But inside the heart are three projections like the necks of three ink bottles and in them are stuck three quills or pens. That figure was made literal merely by a glance up to the twenty-four-hundred-foot top of the republic where each of the three towers, each on its separate little peak, carries at its crest the feather-like weather-vane of a metal pen. These are San Marino's three pens out of the Apennines, for the origin of the name of this mountain range carries back to the Celtic word pen, for peak.

At Borgo Maggiore we were immediately under the precipice on one of the great limestone buttresses which rise from below to support it. One of the curiosities of the little capital is that it is divided in two; the business section, called the Borgo Maggiore, is seventeen hundred feet above the sea, but another seven hundred feet above it, on the crest, is the seat of government. After straining back and forth, up incredible inclines, the car came to a stop outside the gate of San Francesco. No vehicles enter the city.



*Photo by Brogi*

**The Republic of San Marino**

The capital of the Republic on its mountain top



The Republic of San Marino

One of the three Pens built to protect the capitol city on the mountain crest

The streets are too narrow and too steep. Just three times do they pause, in horizontal respites, tiny artificially constructed piazzas, on three different heights.

At the second of these elevations I found the Government House and presented my letter addressed to Prof. Cav. Grand' Uff. Onofrio Fattori, Sindaco di Governo. This gentleman at once corroborated the reputation of the Sammarinesians for hospitality. He put on his hat and locked up his desk on the instant, as though a long wait were terminated with relief—although he had no previous knowledge of me or my letter—and he at once set out to display the sights of his capital. At the moment I was completely deceived, having no idea of what a busy man he was.

We went to the top of the town and walked down; beginning at the neo-classic church, a mere parish church, for here it seems is a country without a cathedral. Its area is divided for spiritual jurisdiction between the bishops of Rimini and Urbino.

The little city has a population of fifteen hundred. They are a sturdy type, much more robust and rugged than those down below. The olive is out of their skin, and instead their cheeks and often their whole face show that they face wind and winter. They look less like the Italians to whom they are akin than like the Breton and Basque fisherman over on the Atlantic coast.



The architecture of the capital has less to distinguish it from the Italian towns roundabout. But the citizens keep their aerie as clean as a pin, with no little assistance, it may reasonably be suspected, from the rain and strong winds prevailing here.

Having visited the handsome Government House, the two other churches, the Liceo, the college, and the key to the library and museum having arrived from another part of town, we entered there. The collection of pictures was ambitious for such a small place, even though an authenticated painter's name was rare, for in the list of them they are honestly marked either as "unknown" or as merely "attributed to" or "of the school of" some famous artist or other.

By far the most interesting picture there for me was a framed lithograph of a gentleman whose features, or at least so much of them as came out from behind expansive whiskers, looked strangely familiar. I asked my amiable guide if he knew whom it represented. But he did not. Then the name came to me. It was Rutherford B. Hayes, President of the United States. When I told the Sindaco he made me spell it down on paper for him. Thereupon he exalted me to the dignity of an authority and consulted me upon a similar engraving in another place. I did not fail him, for it presented the even more familiar features of James A. Garfield, another president. When I told him that President Garfield had been assassi-

nated he appeared charmed, but no doubt only because it added a personal anecdote to the picture. Up to this time he had no idea whose pictures they were, and indeed had no idea how they came to be there. Indeed, the subjects seemed out of place in their every-century-but-nineteenth-century setting.

I had not been thus long with the Sindaco without attaining some fuller idea of his importance in San Marino. In answer to many questions he explained that the army of the republic is wholly defensive and consists of all able-bodied citizens between the ages of eighteen and sixty, with the exception of public functionaries, priests, professors, magistrates, scholars with diplomas, and students; and he admitted that he was the general in command. At the Liceo it escaped that he was the president of that institution. At the library and museum I discovered that he was the curator of both. It seemed as if it might be bearing too hard on a modest man to ask any further questions as to the official personnel of the republic, so if he has other titles they can not be given here.

At this point he led the way down through the little Piazza Titano and down a narrow street to a café where we sat down for refreshment and a rather more uninterrupted talk. We were sitting, he said, in the house where Garibaldi stopped when he fled from Rome in 1849. San Marino was to Garibaldi and his handful of followers like an oasis in the desert,

for Mount Titanus gave them the hospitable refuge which for so many centuries it has offered political and sometimes other outlaws. At once he issued this order so much more suggestive of a vast army and an extensive territory:

“Soldiers!—We have arrived upon a land of refuge, and we owe an irreproachable conduct to our generous hosts. It will secure for us the respect which that misfortune deserves. From this time I release my companions in arms from all obligations, leaving them free to return to private life; but I would remind them that it is better to die than to live slaves to a foreigner. Garibaldi.”

The Austrians in Rimini demanded, under threat of invasion, that San Marino deliver the fugitives. The republic refused, and a safe conduct was arranged for Garibaldi so that he might take refuge in America. He seems not to have had too much confidence in the promises of the Austrians, for, under cover of night, he escaped to the seacoast and in a little fishing boat made his way to Venice.

We were, then, in the *Ristorante Garibaldi* of the yellow hand-bill? It was just that. Whetted on thoughts of its “best and healthiest cooking,” its vaunted wines, and its moderate prices, my appetite sharpened, and I congratulated myself that even without “noting the number” I had not been put to the threatened danger of confusing it with other places, inferentially worse.

From Garibaldi the talk led back and forth from the earliest legends of Mount Titanus, through its fifteen hundred years of independence, down to the present unique administration of the little republic, and nothing the Sindaco had shown of his little capital held an interest equal to his information about his thumb-nail republic, part of it volunteered and part of it drawn out by questions. His nephew had joined us—it was he who found and brought the keys to the museum—and supplemented his uncle and refreshed his memory occasionally with amusing trifles.

Traditionally, he said, the three peaks of Mount Titanus were uninhabited until, in the fourth century, when the imperial rulers of Rome were bearing hard on the believers in Christianity, Marinus, a stone-cutter from Dalmatia, sought refuge on its bleak heights and for himself and his companions here made a hermitage. His chapel soon became a center of pilgrimages. He attracted the attention of Felicia, a Roman matron who owned Titanus. It is part of the legend that he miraculously restored her sons to health and that, in gratitude, she gave him the mountain. Whereupon he erected a cross inscribed with the single word: Liberty. This prong of limestone has been free territory ever since, and to-day the flag of San Marino bears that same single word under its three pens.

Marinus was soon enrolled among the saints of

the new religion and for the original pagan name of the rock the inhabitants thereof substituted his, and ever since it has been called San Marino. During the ensuing fourteen hundred years much blood was spilled in the maintenance of liberty, but in the main San Marino owes its independence less to the shedding of its own blood than to its practically impregnable heights and to its geographical position just between the domains of the Malatesta of Rimini and those of the house of Montefeltro, Dukes of Urbino.

Its independence is cemented in many treaties which repose in its little archives. Both before and after the fourteenth century the Holy See has been a partner in many of these treaties. When Napoleon conquered Italy he respected the independence of the republic and sent it an ambassador. Later when all the other Italian states united they, too, respected the liberty of San Marino, and by treaties confirmed the independence of the tiny enclave in the midst of the united Italy.

Of the many stirring things the good Sindaco told he made nothing else so objective as Cardinal Alberoni's effort, in 1739, to intimidate the Sammarinesians in the name of, but without the understanding of the pope. Later he allowed me to copy an account of it from his own source, of which the following is a translation:



"Alberoni, determined to bring matters to a speedy solution, invaded the territory of the republic on the twenty-fourth of October, and entered the gates of the city by surprise. In the midst of a gloomy silence he passed with his escort through the crowd of citizens, who were thrown into consternation by such audacity.

"A deputation of the Council waited upon him to inquire into the motives which brought him there. Without deigning to reply to this request, Alberoni ordered the people to assemble the following day in the parish church to learn the decision of Rome.

"At the time appointed, the hour of divine service, the bells summoned the faithful. Alberoni entered the church surrounded by his soldiers and partisans; the executioner himself appeared in the procession. The fraction of the people that the legate had gained to his cause crowded into the temple. The offering of the holy sacrifice was interrupted. From the high altar Alberoni demanded the oath of obedience to the head of the Church. Suddenly the venerable Captain Giangi extended his hand toward the tabernacle, and said:

" 'I have sworn fidelity to my lawful prince, the republic of San Marino. I renew the sacred oath.'

"Joseph Amafri repeated his words. Then Girolmo Gozi, protesting with energy against any attack upon the independence of his country, exclaimed with enthusiasm:

" 'Long live San Marino! Long live liberty!'

"This cry, repeated by the officiating priest, was immediately taken up by a thousand voices, and resounded like a thunderbolt under the arches of the temple.

"The cardinal, overcome with anger, departed with threats of a prompt and crushing vengeance upon the inhabitants.

"The people, having returned thanks to God, without leaving the church swore to sacrifice everything to secure harmony, and appointed ambassadors to carry to Rome the expression of their wishes and of their attachment to liberty; then, seizing arms, they proceeded to the abode of the cardinal, who fortunately had taken flight."

When news of this reached Rome, the Pope made a new agreement of friendship with San Marino, acknowledging its right to govern itself without restraint.

San Marino's title to distinction as the oldest and smallest republic in the world is sometimes carelessly challenged in behalf of Andorra in the Pyrenees and its brave little population of freemen. My host was interested to know that I had been to Andorra and thereupon he turned interrogator. Together we pieced a comparison of the two miniature countries.

Andorra does not challenge San Marino's age as a republic, for it is, in fact, not at all a republic. It is an "independency" which pays tribute, however nominal, to France and Spain. As to its age, its traditional freedom dates only to Charlemagne. In size Andorra's one hundred and seventy-five square miles make it more than five times larger than San Marino with its thirty-two square miles. In spite of this disparity in area San Marino's population of twelve thousand seven hundred is nearly three times that of Andorra.

A visit to both countries can not but impress other contrasts between them. Life in Andorra is congested in valleys between lofty peaks, whereas San Marino's people live on a single mountain and on a high open table-land about its base. The Andorrans are a sturdy but primitive group of shepherds and smugglers who live so far from the advances of civilization that they seem to have changed little in character and mode of life during the last several centuries. The Sammarinesians on the contrary, though no braver or freer in spirit, have participated modestly in all the cultural advances, at least of those in the same social order, throughout the rich plain and hillsides of Romagna.

The legislative functions of San Marino are vested in a Sovereign Grand Council of sixty members which comprehensively is termed the Prince of San Marino. The members are chosen for life, with the power to fill their own vacancies. They represent, in equal proportions, the nobles, the citizens and the rural proprietors. There is also a kind of Senate composed of twelve members of the Council. The Council, however, representing the sovereignty of the people, makes and alters the laws, exercises the right of pardon, and is vested with the election of two captains-regent who exercise the executive power.

The captains-regent are elected every six months on the fifteenth of March and of September of each

year, but no one may be elected captain-regent oftener than once in three years. The election is ceremonial and intricate. The Sovereign Council having selected six candidates, the names are written in pairs on three lots. Thereupon, toward evening, the whole Council goes in procession to the parish church of the capital. They are accompanied by music and soldiers and crowds of the citizenry; the attendants bearing torches to give additional solemnity to the occasion. After they have assembled within the church, the parish priest reads the names of the candidates on the three lots. These he places in three ballot balls, places them in a silver urn, and shakes it thoroughly. Then a boy of about eight years draws out one of the balls, and the candidates whose names are inside are recognized as the captains-regent-elect.

The semiannual inauguration days, the first of April and of October, are occasions of great crowds in the capital and the most pretentious procession and ceremony of which the town is capable. Early in the morning, the captains-regent-elect are saluted at their own houses. Later they are escorted to the parish church by a band, rather noisier than musical, and an army of twenty-eight soldiers.

The uniform of a captain-regent is striking. A tight-fitting, skirted, silk vest reaches over puffed trunk-hose to the knees, revealing below it only the black silk stockings. Over this is worn a circular

cloak of black velvet lined with blue silk. At the neck there is a lace jabot, on the head a black velvet biretta edged with ermine, and at the hip a dress sword. The republic keeps six such uniforms of various sizes in stock, for the equipment of the rapidly successive captains-regent. A fit is obviously a hit-or-miss matter, but the uniforms are seldom worn, and a misfit is so much the traditional experience that anything else would be conspicuous, not to say ostentatious.

In order to secure freedom from the influence of personal relations and family ties, inevitably strong in so restricted a population, San Marino goes outside its national boundaries to engage its chief of police and magistrates. For other reasons the republic has only foreign doctors inside its borders. The state engages two such physicians and one surgeon and extends their services free of any charge to all its inhabitants. The public code punishes with a fine, independent of damages obtained judicially, the refusal of such a medical officer to attend the call of a sick person.

The obligation of meeting the public expenses is divided among all the citizens according to their possessions, income and earnings. It was a Sammarinese economist who said: "A great part of liberty consists in paying little." Taxes per capita in the republic are said to be actually about one twentieth of



what they are just across the border on all sides of it in Italy. The republic has no national debt. Some of the public revenue is derived under a law which taxes any one elected to office who refuses to serve; but that is a very small sum.

Naturally one of the most interesting features of San Marino's independence is the republic's relations with Italy. All judicial decisions passed in either of the states are sustained in the other. No passports are required between the two countries. The legal tender of either state is valid in the other, but, though San Marino has coins, it has no paper money of its own. It has its own postage for smaller amounts but uses Italian postage-stamps of the larger denominations. There are no custom duties between the two countries, but instead, Italy pays the smaller state a portion of its own custom revenue proportioned to the republic's inhabitants. Tobacco and salt are two of the state monopolies of Italy, and San Marino has covenanted to grow no tobacco. In compensation for this Italy furnishes the republic annually at cost price seventy-eight thousand kilograms of white salt of Cervia and seventy thousand kilograms of tobacco, and, in case of need, a further supply.

The only fly in this international ointment is said to be a great cannon. It was presented to San Marino by the Italian king as an expression of good will. I had been told on the way to San Marino that its

possession was a source of considerable embarrassment to the republic, but I deliberately neglected to confirm the story there. It was said that the embarrassment of the Sammarinesians arises from the fact that they can not fire this gun. This is not because either of lack of disposition to fire it, or of lack of ammunition, or of deficiency of technical facility. The Sammarinesians can not fire the gun, it was said, because their country is so small, the international boundary on every side being so near the capital. If they fire the gun in any direction, the shell would land over the border on Italian territory, and so might provoke international difficulties. The royal present is supposed to be so delicate a matter with the citizens of the republic, that they never mention it. Certainly no one on the mountain mentioned it to me, and I was afraid, moreover, that to inquire might spoil the story. I was willing the joke might be on me as well as, or instead of, on San Marino. It could be enjoyed none the less so.

The *pasta* having been bestowed, with a generous draft of the delicious red muscatel which is the pride of the vigneron of San Marino, we ascended to the very top of the republic, to the platform which is the roof of the Fratta tower, and there found the climax of any visit to Mount Titanus. Here the mountain shows itself a vast ledge of limestone on edge. Above us was one of the three pens of the re-

public. Another was on the castle tower in the medieval walls which cincture the city and have made it for ages impregnable to any enemy save treachery and starvation. The third pen rose above the high square tower called Montale, detached and lonely, which formerly was used as a watch-tower and for signaling. Above the three pens is only the blue vault of the firmament.

Here, however, one looks down and not up. The sky seems much nearer than the distant earth twenty-four hundred feet below. It was well said that here "the eyes take flight." One stands on an exalted pivot from which one looks out in all directions, as far as human sight will pierce; west and south across fold after fold of Apennines to peaks which are higher than the platform but in the distance do not seem so; north and east across an emerald sea which is the vast plain of Romagna, and farther off to an azure plain which is the Adriatic sea.

The view impresses some with its interminable sameness, so monotonous as to grow almost overpowering, fascinating while it oppresses. An inexplicable impression, for up so high among the elements one can here find all the moods of fickle nature. Within an hour she gave us her smiles and followed them with frowns, though not ugly nor menacing nor terrible.

We had arrived under a cloudless sun. The roll-

ing land as far as the edges of the republic presented geometrical planes all in the varied coloring of fresh new growths, ripened grain, and dark, fallow, plowed earth. The twelve villages of San Marino looked mere white buttons on the national cloak spread about the base of Titanus. From so far above it was difficult to distinguish the farmhouses for the mottled tiles, patternless as a patch of heather, blended with the lights and shadows of fields and rocks and ravines. But the land seemed to be held in small parcels, and these united in a pattern which showed itself fertile and abundant.

The little winding rivers caught the sunlight and so winked up at us as they peeped coyly from behind hills whose crests were far below. They all appeared near, but they are all, nevertheless, beyond the confines of the republic. The roads, white with powdered limestone, seemed to begin nowhere and to lose themselves behind curves, or up glens, or over hilltops as if disappearing over precipices. There was not a straight line in sight. They whirled about in curves like white ribbons thrown upon the carpet and tangled by a playful kitten. A dull gray spot near the edge of the plain where it meets the sea was Rimini. Farther, to the north, an even dimmer shadow was pointed out as Ravenna thirty-three miles away. My guide said that on a perfectly clear day, with strong glasses, one could distinguish the campanile in

Venice another ninety miles beyond! That statement was not substantiated. At the moment a haze was drifting in from the horizon, besides we hadn't the glasses, besides . . . !

Familiar sounds came up from distant invisible creatures. With the eye it was impossible to distinguish men or beasts; but one heard and recognized the voice of a woman scolding a child, the crowing of a rooster, a braying ass, the wail of a crying baby, a full-throated herder calling to his flock or perhaps his dog, the strokes of a hammer on metal, some one singing, bells and even laughter.

Directly, the mists, which had gathered over the sea, drifted landward, and formed little clouds below us, and, as they were caught in the wind, whose velocity is strong on this exposed height, they were dashed against the vast precipice and broke like waves on a rocky coast, and sprayed over us in a delicate ethereal mist which did not even moisten anything. Then other clouds followed in, and gathered and broke into white islands, and as they drifted past we saw the green fields, the brown earth, the dark rolling mountains and the sunlit sea, by mere peeps, as if through rents in a ragged garment.

There, and then, I remembered a Sammarinesian had once said to me: "Other countries may be higher than mine, but no other is so near heaven."



## CHAPTER XIII

### REQUIESCAT IN VENICE

GONDOLA FUNERALS—THE DEAD LAGOON—ISLAND OF SAN MICHELE—VENICE'S HAUNTED HOUSE—A GONDOLIER'S CLOAK—GROTESQUERIES OF GRIEF—A FUNERAL DE LUXE—THE GORGEOUS GONDOLA HEARSE—OLD CUSTOMS—THE ONE GONDOLA RIDE THE POOREST VENETIAN IS SURE TO TAKE

BLESSED is the visit to Venice which reveals what all the guide-books have not already disclosed. It is of all cities the city of the tourist.

In spite of that, however, and in spite of its age, it is still one of the world's unique novelties. No one sees it for the first time without astonishment, or returns to this city, not merely on an island but on three score and twelve islands, without a renewal of wonder at its streets paved with water; at its long, slender, horseless, motorless, wheelless cabs poled along by the gondoliers; at its palaces which gaze continuously at their own reflections; at its hundreds of bridges lifting foot-passengers across the canals from one

island to another; at the moods and charms of this whispering city of delicately broken silences.

Venice is indeed the world's darling. The Byzantine beauty of Saint Mark's; the marble embroideries of the Ducal Palace; the great piazza; the piazzetta with its two columns—one bearing Saint Theodore on his crocodile, the other the winged Lion of Saint Mark pawing its book; that sentimental fraud, the Bridge of Sighs; the Rialto; the Riva degli Schiavoni; the lacy linings of the Grand Canal, all are familiar alike to those who have seen them and to those who have remained at home and have seen only their counterfeit presentment.

Normally and naturally the guide-books, beyond offering one a crutch to limp from point to point and suggesting in each of them a resting-place at prices they repudiate while naming them, are wholly dedicated to survivals, to the present manifestations of the past, to ruins and monuments and to the ivy of history which trails over them. That way there is no change.

Comparing the buxom array of pages in the guide-book of 1843, found at Terni, with its descendants even to the present generation, has lessened some of my awe for modern guide-books. It is not that they are not accurate or that they are not complete. In both respects such literature has crowned itself. But on practically all points, at least in regard to

Italy, saving the shifting sands of prices and conveyances and caravansaries, the job was done for them nearly a hundred years ago. Without change how can one hope for novelty? Obviously novelty, if found in change, is to be found in life, and life does not present itself too persistently to one who buries his nose between the pages of a guide-book.

It was after following all the trails such an expert offered, exhilarated by all the objects marked with a single star and awed by such as twinkled twice, that, forgetting the daily and hourly experiences of all proper travelers, I mistakenly imagined that I had seen all of Venice, at least all of Venice that was worth while. And so, withdrawing my nose from those pages, I gratefully gave the faithful servant his leave. I took to observing Venice alive instead of Venice dead.

Immediately I saw something no one tells you of, yet something which in this strange and fascinating city is more inevitably Venetian than anything else except its waterways, which made that newly discovered something so characteristic. Though it was one of the incidents of life I had not thought of in connection with this city, much less ever seen before, it was instantly obvious as one of the most inevitable expressions of Venetian routine, most Venetian because of a kind existing nowhere else.

It came as the third of a trinity of new and related

experiences to confirm again the hackneyed superstition that likes happen in threes. The remembrance of them reminds of how singularly circumstances do at times converge to make the sequence seem arranged by agencies beyond our ken and even further beyond our control. It is easy to dismiss such curious groups as the pranks of chance, as mere coincidence. But they do not leave one without sense of something more aloof and inexplicable, especially when, as on this occasion, they have to do with after-life.

A balmy sunny morning had invited me out for an aimless, adventure-inviting walk, for, with canals everywhere and streets nowhere, one may yet walk to any point on the seventy-two islands of Venice. There are, to be sure, no streets, but there is a maze of passages between the houses, even though they are generally so narrow that one may stand half-way between and with outstretched arms touch the walls on both sides. In these *calle*, as they are called, one may lose himself without being lost, for here nowhere is far from anywhere else, and if one but keep on walking he is bound to come back to a Rialto bridge-end or to find himself unexpectedly under an arch leading into the sunshine of the piazza of San Marco.

Such walks have none of the obviousness of walks in other cities where streets, straight and often broad, seem to lay the whole prospect out before one without reserve, without mystery or expectation or curiosity.

But here there is scarcely an extended prospect save on the Grand Canal. Away from that the passages let in a modest ribbon of sky and the sun not at all except on cornice lines too far above to count except for light. In such passages one seems to walk at the bottom of fissures which some architectural earthquake has made between the buildings.

It is never far to a breaking space, however, to one of the arched bridges whose low broad steps lift one over a *ria* or water-street, or to one of the *campi* which anywhere else in Italy would be called piazzas. They are tiny irregular little squares, always beside a church. They are indeed the fields which at the beginning of the city's life the people used as churchyards in which to bury their dead. Nowadays each appears the community center of its own particular island. Here, in addition to the church, one finds the barber, the chemist, a café which in fair weather sprinkles its tables and chairs on the pavement before its door, and near the *campo's* center one of those well-heads which collectively are among the city's most unique treasures.

This morning I had woven my way through the Greek quarter, under the leaning tower of their Saint George's, and northward, across the city where it is narrowest, for a walk along the Fondamente Nuove at the edge of the lagoon which separates the city from the mainland. At almost every boat's length a



gondolier woke up to offer the services of his black bark with the manner of a host placing his house at one's disposal. A lira will open the lips of any of them for conversation, but it may, indeed, be had for less, since, next to sleep and food, they love talk.

I asked one of them the name of the lagoon. When he answered: "Laguna Morta (the Dead Lagoon)," although others said the qualification refers to the state of the water, he uttered the words in a reticent tone which indicated that to his superstitious nature they referred to man and his destiny; and the morning had been given its mood.

Lest his reply depress, which it didn't in the least, he added cheerfully, "*Com' è bella!*" and there he was right. At its surface the shallow lagoon bears no indications of its depth, or lack of it, and, for one coming out of the narrow shaded byways, the bright broad waters shimmered with something like laughter. Here the rims of land are so flat that they have an appearance of great distance. Off to the north there is a blend of pink and white and delicate blue and gray which looks like a low opalescent band of clouds, but the gondolier said, what might, indeed, have been suspected, that they were the Alps. Nothing seemed near except an island walled in white, made higher with a slender campanile and the black fingers of a few cypresses.

The gondolier followed my eye and asked if I

would go to San Michele, and when I wouldn't, he laughed and said, "Well, we all go there at last," assuming that I knew it was Venice's cemetery. It was indeed pleasant of Piero while passing it to have said to the incomparable Consul, "It is a small place, but there is room enough for all Venice in it," and one likes Giovanna for supporting him with: "It is true, and here we poor folks become landowners at last." It seems ungracious to confute these amiable witnesses. It would be well if it were so, but it is little more than half the fact. Though all Venice come to this island cemetery at last, it is so small that there is not room enough for them to own their homes and so the poor find themselves only temporary tenants. After a few years, unless an annual fee is paid, they are dispossessed and retired to the confusion of a vast common pit at the end of the island.

The boatman asked if I had been here for All Saints and All Souls, and rolled his eyes and groaned in a fine counterfeit of regret when he heard I hadn't. Those, it seems, are the days indeed to come to this *fondamenta*. Then there are not boats enough in all Venice to carry the crowds that wish to visit the cemetery. Then the city places here a bridge of boats extending to San Michele, and crowds flock across it bearing flowers to decorate the graves; and one wonders whether some few of them may ever be cast with the evicted and homeless in the common pit.

Thinking to turn from a topic which seems to haunt this side of the city and to make the Dead Lagoon seem, as the boatman thought it, much more a Lagoon of the Dead, I asked about the buildings on the *fondamenta*, especially a pink and white house which rose out of the water just beyond, and which, in spite of its cheerful coloring and the vines billowing over its garden wall, had the aspect of abandonment. This question was open sesame to the boatman and he told a long tale, much of which would have been clearer to a better understanding of the Venetian dialect and a readier ear for swift utterance. But enough emerged to make it clear this was the *Casa dei Spiriti*, Venice's haunted house. It is indeed abandoned now. These people are loath to live in a house of death, for such it has been. Its latest tenants were the dead which formerly were brought there at evening for a night's rest before resuming their journey for a morning absolution at San Michele, and such peace as that overcrowded graveyard will allow them.

Not knowing that coincidence was at work on this walk, and innocently thinking to turn the trend of experience, I left the lagoon and plunged in among the houses again in the general direction of the Grand Canal. At the first bridge, some distance in, a little group of boys was assembled peering over the parapet into the canal. A woman under a head burden

passed behind them. She was overbusy or too experienced for, with a side glance over the boys' shoulders, she continued on her way, merely crossing herself. The men who looked in that direction, however, raised their hats. That should have told, if nothing else had, what was near, for an Italian, with motives of his own, whether in mere courtesy to the living in bereavement, or in superstitious deference to death, always uncovers in passing a funeral.

A priest paused near the boys on the bridge and I stood next to him. The boys were looking down to a flight of stone steps descending into the canal where a simple gondola without cabin lay alongside. A little group of six or seven had just arrived at the steps below. They looked to be the poorest of the poor. The gondolier received from one of them a little wooden box, not a yard long, which he laid with a nice tenderness in the bottom of his boat. A young couple followed and seated themselves near it. A little girl of four or five was handed in and took a seat between them. The gondolier fumbled under a seat and found his cloak and spread it over the crude little coffin. The young woman's face was not veiled. Not a word was spoken and not a tear was shed. The gondola glided on its way under the dip of the great oar at its stern. As it disappeared under the bridge the group left behind on shore followed it with stark dry eyes. The priest's lips moved in a sibilant

whisper and his hand, close to his body, sketched a benediction. The water funeral belongs exclusively to Venice. Here only the burial barge moves silently away as if over the waters of an actual Styx, with a modern Charon at the sweep.

A moment after, while we were still gazing into the now empty canal, one of the boys seized another's cap and tossed it over the parapet. With a shout, they scattered, leaving the capless one speechless and in tears, but these were new and sudden tears of rage and resentment and they were the only tears in evidence at this funeral. The restraint of those in bereavement need not have surprised for one may match this stoic restraint all over Italy especially on the uncovered faces of the humble mourners who may so often be seen on foot following behind a solitary lumbering hearse, too poor to afford the retirement of a carriage. It did surprise, however, perhaps because of the tradition of Venetian hysteria on such occasions.

In the past the Venetians bore a reputation for abnormally grotesque efforts to convey an idea of funeral grief. They went in strong for tantrums. They were Oriental in their wailing and shrieking, and in the theatrical objectivity of their mourning. In the Middle Ages, and even for some centuries later, a child would have been held lacking in normal affection for his parent, or a parent for his offspring,



or a husband for his wife, or a wife for her husband, if he did not stage an elaborate exhibition of woe. It was not expected that one should crowd on the millinery of mourning merely in bands and badges and veils, or by draping one's doorways in festoons of black, and restrain oneself to decent tears and honest sobs.

The widows and widowers at least were looked to for something livelier than this, and from some accounts they generally came up to expectations, screaming distractedly, tearing out their hair by alleged handfuls, rocking and moaning in a delirium of affected and perhaps effective emotional distress. The climax came at the moment when the bearers arrived to carry out the dead. Then it would seem to have been a faithless wife or a heartless unappreciative husband who did not throw himself across the threshold and pump up a theatrical protest against this gesture of separation, and literally hold his ground until dragged away by friends who were doubtless awed by the performance. Those were days when grief was grief, and came done up in large packages, somewhat inflated.

The poor, indeed, sometimes gave their grief a practical turn, capitalizing their unfortunate situation. On such occasions they exposed their dead in the streets and depended upon the spectacle to draw alms from passers-by and so they collected the means

at least for burial. Remembering this made it notable how much more, during the passing ages, the Venetians have changed than has Venice.

The priest waited to see the boy's cap fished out of the canal and restored to its owner, and offered a pleasant comment or two which acted as a social solvent, and we walked away together. I remarked to him on how surprising the obvious might sometimes be and confessed that this was the first time I had ever seen a funeral in Venice or thought of such a thing.

"Ah, but it was not a good example," he apologized. "These unhappy people were very poor. You should see a real Venetian funeral."

I admitted my eagerness to do just that, and, after a moment's thought, he, like a true Italian, abandoned his own errands and undertook mine instead. In his company the distance seemed nothing at all to the Campo dei Santi Apostoli (the Field of the Holy Apostles). There he pointed out a modest shop over whose door were the imposing words "*Impresa Transporti e Pompe Funebri* (which may perhaps be rendered: Funeral Displays and Transportation Undertaken)." Indicating that some one inside would be able to tell me of a really good funeral, he bowed himself on his separate way.

The man inside was a perfect little cricket for good humor. In answer to my inquiry he first con-

sulted his own lists, then he scanned the latest edition of his newspaper, then he telephoned mysteriously but still in good humor, and finally bolted out of the door into the Campo at sight of some oracle, and returned triumphantly with the assurance that there would be a splendid funeral, worthy of Venice, worthy of the brave officer whose obsequies it was to be, the second morning beyond, in the Field of Saints John and Paul. Then, and it is not easy to be sure whether his motives were disinterestedly courteous or somewhat confused with the prospect of a customer, he gave me a handsomely illustrated catalogue of his firm's funeral barges and of its prices, from which at my leisure I learned more than I could ever have understood of the chatter of the sprightly mortician.

From this booklet it was apparent that there is a *barca funebre*, actually a floating hearse, to meet every degree of taste and means. The humblest had two gondoliers and an embroidered pall, which showed how irreducibly simple had been the exit of the baby under a gondolier's cloak for pall and speeded by a single oar. Through fifteen grades the poms and prices worked up from the simplest order to the most luxurious, by the process of adding more gondoliers, silver or gold trappings on men and boats, a pavilion or catafalque, and carvings and allegorical figures at the bow or the stern or at both.

The last touch of ceremonial elegance was per-

sonified by a *servo d'onore*, a flunky in waiting, who was pictured holding Æsculapius' staff with the serpents twined about it. It seemed somewhat strange to find this emblem of healing made so conspicuous for an occasion brought about by the ultimate and definite failure of the healers. Perhaps it was intended as a figure of sympathy, or spiritual healing, for the serpent did get into Paradise though with no healing effect withal. On the whole, if the staff fitted such an occasion it undoubtedly was for another and better reason.

The pictures and the promises would whet any one's eagerness to see such splendor. My curiosity got so far ahead of the clock that the intervening day before the *funerale di lusso*, as the man in the shop called it, developed all kinds of impatience by its unending length. I walked all over Venice but in the end it was entirely too apparent that I was only seeking out the Field of Saints John and Paul, for it was there that the walk inevitably led.

I remember a subconscious surprise in finding it so quiet and normal, with no hint of what was to be expected on the morrow. The waters of the *Ria dei Mendicanti* (the Canal of the Beggars) were annoyingly dull. The occasional tap of the wooden-soled pattens of some woman crossing the bridge only accented the quiet.

The equestrian statue of Bartolomeo Colleoni for

once had not the thrill which it usually gives its beholder, as for instance it gave Ruskin when it caused him to declare as his belief that a more glorious work of sculpture did not exist. Even the façade on the Scuola di San Marco was taken coolly for granted, and hitherto it had been a never-failing wonder how the Lombardi had, with a few pieces of colored marble and such delicate low relief, secured the miracle of distance in his lower panels. Surely near-sighted people have walked into one of them in particular, mistaking it for a practical passageway down a splendid colonnade. I even brushed by the drowsy doorman of the church which gives its name to this Field, and roamed about its vast interior, and calmly saw all over again the incredibly beautiful tombs of the Doges in their black and white glories heaped against the delicate pink of the raw brick walls. My indifference was incorrigible. So I trailed back through the Merceria to Saint Mark's and sank down beside a tin table and succumbed to *caffè espresso* and ennui.

Next morning it seems to have been decreed by the imps of irony that I should oversleep. The gate clock, as I hurried under it, indicated I would be late. The bronze giants with their hammers raised on either side the bell never seemed readier to speed the hour, if the machinery inside would only do its part. It would surely have been embarrassing, however, to have known what the dignified and leisurely Vene-



tians thought of the mad foreigner dodging among them as he rushed through their little passageways. At the Canal of the Beggars at last, the pink bridge held up a crowd of the curious, a sight which relieved me with the hope that all might not have been missed. Once established there at the top of the bridge's curve I found that there could not have been a better position to command the Field and the Canal.

The square was packed with people behind a gray rim of soldiers who kept a large space clear as far as the waterside. The crowd ran rather largely to women, particularly mothers with babes in arms. They were good babies, but not too clean. If one of them cried, its mother crooned to it, but cry and croon were lost in the high staccato chatter of the women. There is a chapel in the Scuola and it was obvious that the requiem mass was being said in there. The officers on duty with the soldiers paced back and forth slowly to break the monotony and seemed modestly conscious of how fine they looked in their gray and silver uniforms, their Robin Hood caps and quills, and the azure ceremonial ribbon drawn across their back and bosom and knotted at the hip.

The canal was packed, too, with the funeral craft, all of them upholstered with soft black cloth. Half a dozen were simple gondolas, the interior of their cabins screened with black curtains, and their only decorative feature were two rows of soft, fluffy, black

silk balls on top, and the cold gleam of the *ferro* rising above the prow. They clustered behind the *barca funebre*, which met handsomely any imagined idea of a great funeral barge.

It was some ten feet wide and sixty feet from end to end. It, too, was upholstered throughout in black cloth, including the deck and outrails. The high graceful sweeps of bow and stern were decorated with handsome black carving tipped with silver. At the stern a life-size silver effigy of Father Time, with hour glass and scythe, sat enthroned. At the bow, reaching far out, as if magically drawing the bark forward, was a silver angel of the resurrection with his long silver trumpet at his lips.

At the center of the barge rose a catafalque and canopy, likewise in black and silver. The canopy was supported by four columns, and its top was decorated with an orb and cross at its center, with antique lamps on each corner, and with skull and cross devices in white metal on each side. The heavy curtains of the canopy were edged with silver fringe and were looped back with silver ropes into graceful formal folds. Underneath it was a large black coffer. Four gondoliers, in suits of black velvet elaborately trimmed with silver lace, stood at their sweeps, two forward and two aft. At the barge's side stood a splendid flunky, his black court dress buried in silver cords and fringe and lace. His hair, or at least so

much of it as appeared under a vast cocked hat, was silver too, doubtless naturally so, for his face and bearing were venerable as well as overwhelming. He leaned on a serpent-twined staff which rose above him like a bishop's crozier.

The sudden click of the soldiers coming to attention announced the end of the religious ceremony in the Scuola. Silence settled over the crowd as the procession appeared, led by another ostentatious flunky solemnly carrying a white and silver cross. He was followed by twelve pairs of flower-bearers, each pair staggering under a huge Italian funeral wreath. Advancing they deployed into a semicircle and into it came the mourners; before them four uniformed mutes brought the rolling bier to a pause, and a Dominican monk and his attendants followed. When this group had formed itself, a military official delivered a fervent but brief and restrained oration.

At its conclusion he stepped forward and silently shook hands with each of the mourners. This was the signal for every one else who had come to the requiem to come forward and do the same. The women, with unveiled faces, bore themselves with a pathetic dignity. Their set sad faces met every eye bravely and without a trace of the emotion they must have felt. This ceremony of the silent hand-clasp is an ancient rite. Formerly it was carried out in the court of the Ducal Palace or under the porticoes of the Rialto on the day after interment.



*Photo by Alinari*

A Venetian Funeral Barge





*Photo by the Author*

*A Venetian Funeral*

Before placing the casket in the funeral barge the friends of the deceased deliver eulogies upon him



At the conclusion the casket was placed in the dark coffer under the canopy on the *barca funebre*. The flowers were spread over the deck fore and aft of the catafalque, from Father Time enthroned at one end to the Angel blowing his resurrection trumpet at the other, and there were so many of them that they made the whole barge bloom. Eight soldiers came aboard and stood at attention around the central pavilion. The chief flunky, whose uniform represented all that silver trappings could do to make it ornate, placed himself in a central position forward. He and the gondoliers and the guard of honor stood knee high in the flowers. The priest and his attendants, the family and their friends bestowed themselves behind the curtains of the other gondolas.

Noiselessly the floral barge, followed by the other gondolas, moved up the Canal of the Beggars. From the bridge the shadowy waters resembled a dark finger pointing directly to the distant white walls of San Michele out in the sunlight of the lagoon. As the oars dipped with their slow rhythm, and the procession glided forward, it seemed that nowhere else than in Venice would it have been possible to surround such a cortège with equal dignity and beauty.

The crowd of mothers took themselves and their babes away; all of them but one. She stood gazing after the diminishing perspective of the line of boats which now looked like a black staff with a bouquet

at its top. As I turned, before going on my way, our eyes met. She pressed her lips thin and shook her head, and then, through a reticent smile, gave me this bit of Venetian wisdom:

“We may be too poor to afford a gondola while we live, but there is not one of us but has his gondola ride at least once.”

## CHAPTER XIV

### ITALY BEYOND THE ADRIATIC

SHIFTING BOUNDARIES—AQUILEIA, MOTHER OF VENICE—THE CARSO PLATEAU—MIRAMAR AND THE MAD EMPRESS—TRIESTE—AUSTRIAN ACCENT AND ITALIAN LOYALTY—ITS GRAND CANAL—HUMANE CARTERS—STEEP HILLSIDES—THE TREASURE AT THE TOP—CIRCULAR FIELDS—FIUME—THE ITALIANIZATION OF THE AUSTRIAN EAGLE—THE ISTRIAN PENINSULA—POLA—ITS ARENA—SURPRISES AT PARENZO—TWO OF THE OLDEST CHURCHES IN THE WORLD

CURIOSITY having nibbled at nearly every other corner of Italy, it was only natural for it to wish to be satisfied about the “redeemed” provinces and cities east of the Adriatic.

Italy has never forgotten nor allowed the rest of the world to forget that there are Italians on the east coast of the Adriatic. Especially in realizing the union of the Italian states under an Italian king during the nineteenth century did they insist that their natural eastern boundary extended around the head of the Adriatic and down the east coast thereof at least so far as to include Fiume.

During most of that century Austria had held the Lombard and Venetian provinces and so kept the northern boundary of Italy at the Po River and its eastern boundary so far west as the Ticino River. The cities of Piacenza, Parma and Ferrara were on Italy's northern border until 1859 when Lombardy was retrieved, but even then Brescia, Verona, Vicenza, Padua, as well as all Italian cities east and north of them, were still under foreign domination.

After repeated revolutions during the first two-thirds of the century, the Austrians were finally in 1866 dispossessed of much of the three provinces of Venetia and the eastern limit of Italy was advanced sixty miles toward Trieste and Fiume, with the eastern limit fairly within sight of the former city. There it remained until European boundaries crumbled under the spasms of the recent Great War. In the succeeding readjustments the limits of united Italy were advanced eastward nearly two hundred miles, and Trieste, Fiume and the peninsula of Istria, with Pola at its tip, found themselves once more affiliated with Rome.

The way from Venice to the "redeemed" territory keeps a safe distance north of the marshy margins of the sea, mostly on low, flat, fertile lands which give no vista of it. The Alps, several miles farther north, rise in accented splendor above a dark and inarticulate foundation, but, near the clouds, under

snow and sunshine, they gleam like burnished bronze and silver.

Nothing else breaks the monotony until, approaching Cervignano, seaward one sees a graceful campanile above a village group, and is told that it is Aquileia. Little save associations is left there to make the name thrilling. Under the empire, however, it was famous for its amber and glassware, and in size it ranked next after Rome and Capua among the cities of Italy, and ninth among all the cities of the great world under the Roman Eagle. Here Cæsar Augustus, ten years before the birth of Christ, received a visit from Herod, King of Judea.

Perhaps Aquileia is, however, more interesting as the mother of Venice. At the height of her power Alaric descended from the north but she resisted him successfully. Not so half a century later, when, in 452, Attila led his Huns against her, and the besieged were reduced to the last extremity. Then, according to the legend, the Aquileians, to cover their retreat, mounted wooden images of soldiers on the ramparts. At first the Huns were deceived and the besieged escaped across the lagoon and sailed westward. When one of Attila's captains flew his hawk at the walls it lighted upon the helmet of one of the immobile wooden soldiers and the ruse was exposed. Then the Huns scaled the walls, sacked the city and destroyed it. But the fleeing Aquileians found refuge on a



closely set group of many tiny islands, just where the shore bent south, and there they settled and set up their glass works. Thus Venice was born.

After leaving Cervignano one becomes conscious of the Julian Alps bending down toward Istria, and almost immediately the road leaves the meadows of the land behind the lagoons and mounts the Carso Plateau. Suddenly one has exchanged a flat but smiling world of green for a high, broken, sterile world of gray. The Carso is of calcareous formation and the limestone dominates the surface; everywhere are massive protrusions of rock surrounded by a soil the surface of which is whitened with uncountable fragments. Here the earth is without order except where man, ever eager for a scrap of it, has gathered up the stones to fence off his paltry portions, and so poor and niggardly they are that one wonders why he should do this. There is in the landscape a suggestion of what the *plaga dei trulli* may have looked like before man conquered it.

The savage monotony of the land fairly crushes one with its sadness. The way is made bearable, however, and beautiful, because the road hangs nearly over the sea. The watery stretch, so far below, is gray and still. The brown triangular sails flap listlessly against their rakish masts. Only the flocks of white swans, hovering with wings spread, give motion to the scene. It is the Gulf of Trieste. Somewhere

ahead hidden by the cliffs is the city which gives the gulf its name, and the shadow on the horizon beyond is Istria.

Nothing on the nearer shore below attracts like the dark piny flank at an abrupt point where amid cypress sentinels a white castle rises on its dark pedestal. It commands a view of the sea as far as the horizon yields surface. What a beautiful, lonely, tragic place for a mad empress to await year after year the return of her dead consort!

This is Miramar which the Archduke Maximilian built in the middle of the last century for himself and Carlotta, sister of the Belgian king. Thence they went hopefully to govern their Mexican empire. When revolution rose about them she escaped to Europe to seek aid for the emperor, but failure and disappointment and grief overthrew her reason. She remained at Miramar. If they told her that the emperor had been executed by his subjects and had already passed this way to his Viennese tomb, it was meaningless to her vacant mind. There, through nearly all the years of an uncommonly long life, she sat looking out on the sea, watching the low corner of Cape Salvore, waiting for the ship that could never bring back her lover.

Coming from Venice into Trieste, one seems to have left a world of make-believe behind. The commonplace realities of this great seaport on the Adri-

atic have thus, indeed, a piquancy they could not have for one coming from any other than the city of islands and canals, of bridges and gondolas. It is surely an experience to find oneself surprised in the presence of wheels. Yet, during the first moments in the streets of Trieste the world on wheels seemed the most engrossing novelty. The tram trains clanging by and the red taxis darting in every direction seemed to have a too ostentatious importance. After Venice the streets seemed wastefully wide, the squares vast, the buildings overwhelming. The hurrying crowds seemed futile, the noise vulgar and unendurable. But soon a sense of proportion returned, and Trieste was seen for what it is, just a great, normal, modern, commercial city.

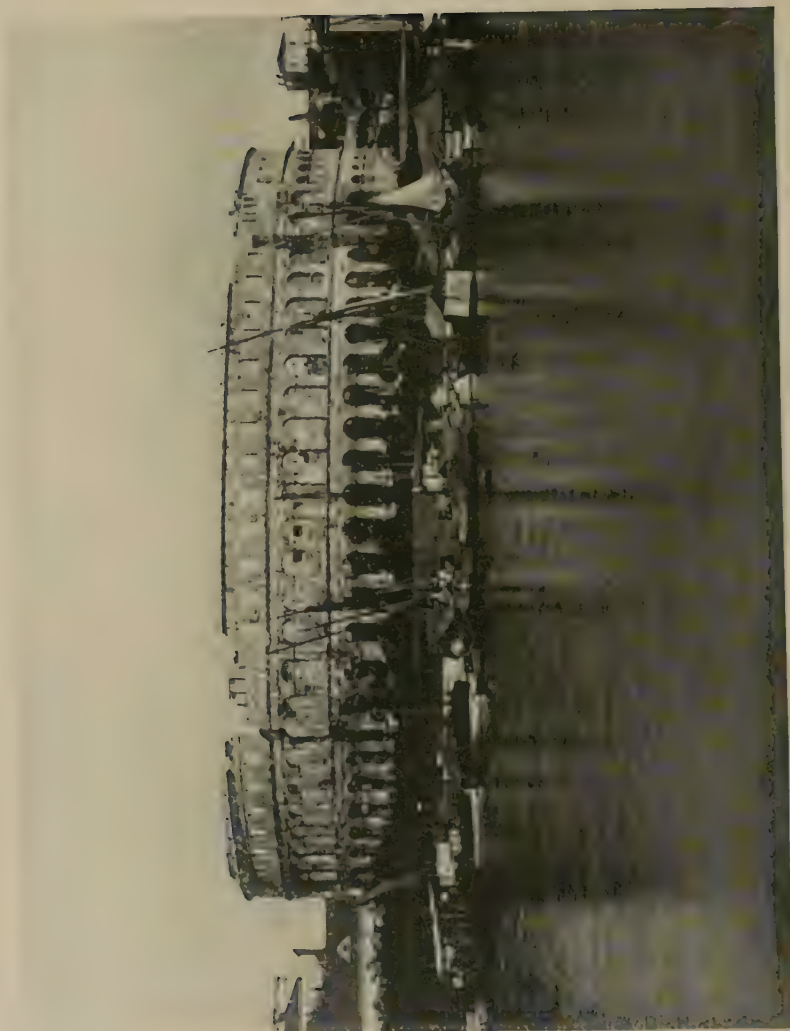
The Austrians are gone, but they have left behind a foreign accent on the architecture of the city and on the faces and tongues of the citizens. Here the Italian is not always quite himself. Sometimes he is fair. Often his patronymic is Slovene, and frequently his speech varies the many-voweled Italian with harsh groups of consonants which settled here under the double eagle. True, the red, white and green flies at the flagstaffs and the carabinieri stroll about two by two. But these uniformed officials seem as if, perhaps, they might be visitors like ourselves. Elsewhere in Italy their reticent leisureliness may appear somehow incompatible with their police job.



*Photo by Alinari*

*Trieste*

The Grand Canal with the Neo-Classical Church of Saint Anthony at its head



*Photo by Alinari*

Pola  
The Roman Arena by the Adriatic



Here it seems perfectly compatible with their appearance as visitors.

For all these superficial aspects the city and the people are deeply and loyally Italian, and under Austrian rule it was a hot-bed of Italian patriotism. But Trieste has had to take the economic bitter with the patriotic sweet. The post-war economic readjustment of Central and Eastern Europe has destroyed or deflected about one-half of its former trade. It is still a great and active port but it is a question whether with the internationalization of the Danube it can hope to regain any considerable measure of its former prosperity.

The civic center of Trieste is the Piazza dell' Unità on the handsome stone embankments opposite the Basin of San Giusto about midway of the far-flung docks. The buildings about it are splendid but in a wholly modern way. The considerable stretch of city at the level of the sea is broken into by reaches of foot-hills whose flanks are dotted over with white and brown and red terraces of Triestan homes. Northward they lift to the sky a recently erected, white stone lighthouse, superb in height and line, whose beacon invites the ships safely into harbor from half-way across the Adriatic. The hill that projects farthest of all toward the water rises just behind the handsome town hall immediately on the square. It is crowned with the castle fortress about which

jumble the tiled roofs of the medieval city, and the contrast, between the smart, modern, lower town and the quaint irregular old city above it, sets off each of them to advantage and at one glance shows of what Trieste is made.

The steamers lying along the docks on the seaside are the index of Trieste's reason for being. But great ships at rest, lashed alongside wharves and warehouses which smother their fine lines, show themselves at their poorest. They need the freedom of the open sea. Here they explain without pleasing. The picturesque bit of water life is rather along the so-called Grand Canal, as seen from its own Ponte Rosso. It is a broad, direct, water street about five hundred yards long, packed on both sides with small fishing and market craft, displaying all kinds and colors of sails, and alive with the polyglot population of the Istrian shores. The vista down this maritime motley is given a surprising effect by the chaste neo-classic formalities of the church of St. Anthony which rises athwart its end.

One senses the Levant a little everywhere in Trieste, particularly among the smallboat-men of the canal and even more singularly in the fact that the three most splendid modern temples here are of Eastern cults: the Orthodox Serbian church, the Illyrian Greek church, and the Jewish Synagogue; and each is an excellent specimen of the architecture of its own historic background.

The unique historic treasure of Trieste is a funny little cathedral near the castle and so at the top of the hill of the old town. I was prepared for the height of this hill, but scarcely for its abruptness. Yet there is an obvious indication of the steepness of Trieste's hills in nearly every street of the flat lower city. It is found in the low gear of the carting vehicles here. They are fairly long wagons held only about a foot off the ground by tiny but strong wheels. Thus the way up the steep inclines is made easier. But, lest the plunge down these same inclines be made too dangerously easy, the metal tires are controlled by no common brake, for a crank and screw both set and hold them. This even is not considered security enough, for, dangling forward, on such sturdy carts are festoons of chains to lock wheel to wheel and so put the horses or mules or oxen to the safer task of dragging the vehicles down the plunging hill streets, so that with any lessening of restraint the cart will not strike out for other tragic possibilities after taking its own mad headway and wrecking the beast and its burden. The carter here is a true friend of his beast, for when the load and the way up-hill are too much for the animal, he slips his own arms through a leather brace and with his chest and shoulders thrusts his strength against gravity, and so man and beast together share the difficulties of the grade.

I wondered if in being directed to ascend by the Street of the Cathedral I had not been sent by the

steepest of all ways. It mounts in curves and the side walls offer the aid of iron hand-rails for the weary to drag up themselves. The metal of these rails was not only without rust, but its glowing patina showed how good a friend the Triestans find it. I have since been told that the hand-rails are less for lifting the foot passenger along than to help him to keep his feet under the terrible strength of the *Bora*, a stormy wind which in this quarter of the Adriatic is unbelievably strong.

The climb may be broken agreeably at the Via del Trionfo by diverging a few steps to see a Roman arch partly absorbed by a modern building. Time and decay have done all they could to substitute for the splendor of newness the delicate tones and graceful broken traceries of age. They call it the Arch of Richard and the piazzetta near by is similarly named. It is an incongruous unRoman name for such an authentic Roman monument. And if you venture as much to a Triestan he hastens to tell you that these names recall that Richard Cœur-de-Lion, on his return from the Crusades, was a prisoner here; for such is the local legend.

The venerable Cathedral on the hilltop is built on the foundations of a Roman temple. Parts of it have been parts of buildings used for Christian worship since the fifth century. Actually it is the sum of two churches and a baptistry thrown together to make a

single nave of five aisles. It has been added to and readjusted and yet is withal so small and irregular, and its flat roof comes so low, that it has the friendliest possible aspect. Literally it is as broad as it is long. The shallow nave is further shortened by the raised sanctuary which extends nearly half the length of its center aisle. It is an unostentatious little temple yet it has its treasures. Perhaps they would have claimed more attention if it had not been for the accent which the departed Austrians seem to have left even here in this very Italian church. Surely no Italian installed these stout regular pews which fill up the nave so completely, or the gilt frames with their hard glistening luster, about the pictures in the shadowy apse behind the high altar, or yet the polished brass that shines out in many places. It all reflects transalpine taste.

The little piazza is a hanging garden near the sky for leisurely Triestans who come and sit under the trees on warm days and find here a fresher air than is stirring in the lower city. On a wall on one side of the piazza is a tablet bearing the names of Trieste's dead in the late war. A few minutes' study of these names discloses a significant indication of the population's racial and political character. Half the surnames are pure Italian, half of them are Slovene. But all the given names are pure Italian. Such are the Triestans, living as well as dead.



There is another reminder of the antiquity of civilization here in the new use of the old churchyard. Its tombstones are all gone and in their places are the stone fragments which the archæologists have dug up in the neighborhood. It is a pretty open-air lapidary under whose trees rise a little reconstructed Roman temple and the cenotaph of the savant Winckelmann.

The railway from Trieste to Fiume pursues a devious way on a northern curve pushed every which way by the unyielding hills of the Carso. The motor road wriggles its way along a comparatively straight line more to the south. The distance by rail is eighty miles, by motor road it is forty. Yet the train exacts four hours of a passenger's time, whereas a motor-car took us there, uncomfortably to be sure, in half that time.

The Carso was true to its former self as a high, rolling, rocky mass, with a northern sterility hard to believe of a latitude on a line with Venice, Padua, Verona and Milan. There was variety in occasional pine forests. The white stone outcroppings were here gathered into hedges which, for some ungiven reason, described detached circles all over the landscape. However large or small the farms represented by the stone-encircled fields, the farmhouses themselves were few; and wherever the inhabitants of this rude region were, the day we passed through it

neither man nor beast was on the roads, in the fields or the pastures.

Half a dozen rude villages dot the way, but they too secreted their scanty life. The wooded mountains have not yielded a single wooden house, not even a wooden shingle. Sometimes the houses are thatched with straw but generally the roofs are of tile, but so weathered that its pink is almost faded out, and this, perhaps, made the detached houses indistinguishable in a world mottled with gray.

When the road approached the coast and began the long descent toward the Gulf of Fiume, the vegetation changed, and nature smiled again. It was as if it were another country. Singularly enough such was the case, for within a few miles, the motor road here passes through Jugo-Slavia. However, the change in the natural aspect of things was the effect, not of a political control, but of the moisture blown in from the sea and precipitated on the descending hillsides.

It is not easy to be fair to Fiume. Surely a city which has made such a noise in the post-war world should justify a visit. No one cares to confess that he should have known what to expect; yet it is all set out in the places where facts are usually found. But cramming in advance, after all, robs travel of one of its chief delights—the traveler's pretense of discovery.

D'Annunzio's bizarre performance dragged Fiume before the world and held it there an issue and hence a topic for sixteen months, from September, 1919, to January, 1921. The city had been long under Hungarian control. Its population, nevertheless, was three-quarters Italian. These longed for and insisted on reunion with Italy. The city is, however, only a narrow river's width from Jugo-Slavia, and the latter country contended that necessity demanded that it should belong to her. But blood here seems to be thicker than commerce, Fiume wanted to return to the Italian fold, and, indeed, proclaimed its reunion to Italy on October 30, 1918. Both the mannerly countries involved kept hands off and the issue was submitted to the Peace Conference.

Then suddenly and unofficially the Italian poet, supported by virtual deserters from the Italian Army and Navy, seized the town and declared it should be Italian or nothing. Italy's desire to have Fiume did not include taking it with the embarrassing aid of her poet. This strangest of modern European coups was brought to an end, oddly enough, by Italy recapturing the city from the very people trying to press it on her, and administering it as a "free state" under a treaty with Jugo-Slavia. The situation, however, satisfied no one and the hue and cry over Fiume kept up until 1924, when a new treaty between the same parties quieted the issue by assigning Fiume defi-

nately to Italy but giving to Jugo-Slavia a definite eastern portion of the port. Thereupon Fiume subsided.

It is surprising to go, unprepared, and find what a modest little place it is. Trieste has a population of over two hundred thousand. Fiume has barely thirty thousand. It is a decent little city, profoundly Italian at heart, with a conspicuous Hungarian veneer, orderly and direct and modern except for a small and older central quarter with vague suggestions of its Venetian days. But, on the whole, it is without particular distinction, except to the ear. The international bridge between Fiume and its adjacent Jugo-Slavian suburb of Sussak accommodates a flow of Italians and Croats in both directions. On every hand the ear catches the echo of it, for, like Trieste, Fiume is polylingual; in one ear is heard Italian, while the other is filled with Croatian and Slavic mixtures, confusing as the tongues of Roussillon.

When all is heard and seen in Fiume, however, it may be that the visitor will remember most vividly, and with most amusement, the bronze eagle surmounting the clock-tower which rises high above one of the original gates of the old walled city. Once it was an eagle with two heads, emblem of the Dual Empire. One night during the period of D'Annunzio's occupation, however, a zealous Italian climbed up to the peak of the cupola and half decapitated the

bird. Such it remains to-day, its wings spread defiantly, an eagle with two necks but only one head.

My curiosity, which had accompanied me into and out of Trieste, to penetrate into the rocky interior of the peninsula of Istria broke up on the rocks of the Carso and disappeared under the friendly advice of a citizen of the town of Pisino which stands at its very center. He offered no promise of interest in the country back from the coast, no incentive to spy upon the simple eventless life of the Croats, Slovenes and Roumanians who predominate there. Human and historic interest had always hugged the coast, he said, as had the Italians who had been drawn and held there during so many centuries by their ties with Venice. He was himself a Slovene, and so it was the more arresting to hear him tell of the hundred years of Istria's waiting to come back into the arms of Italy; and he summed it in a single phrase: "Then Istria was a land of hidden flags." Pressed, he explained that such flags were the forbidden banners of Italy, and that they had been secreted in attics and cellars awaiting the day of deliverance and reunion, when they might be unfurled again and freely flown at windows and carried in procession.

The city of Pola at the southern tip would after all have been the main objective of any trip down the rough and rocky spine of the peninsula, and Pola could be reached from Fiume by steamer between





*Photo by Alinari*

**The Basilica Eufrasiana at Parenzo**

This is one of the oldest Christian churches in the world and its mosaics rival those of Ravenna, Palermo and Cefalù



*Photo by Alinari*

The Apse of the Basilica Eufрасiana at Parenzo

midnight and morning. This diversion fully justified itself.

The city is invisible, approached from the sea, until the ship noses into the small snug bay which it commands. But when on display it shows the vitality of a purposeful place. Such it is as one of Italy's chief naval and military strongholds in the Adriatic. For the most part the beauty of its medieval and modern buildings may be matched elsewhere. Its most distinguished appeal is, therefore, in its Roman remains.

On the Riva, raising its high, slender, Corinthian columns toward the sea, is the small but elegant and well-preserved Temple of Augustus and Roma. It has served many gods and men and even beasts, for when the pagan cult declined it became a Christian church, and to-day it is a museum, but during an interval it has declined to the humble estate of being a barn.

Circling the little mid-city hill on which once rose its defensive castle, one finds, on one side of it, the twin arches of the Porta Gemina with the fragments of an exquisite cornice over its central pier. On the other side of the hill, is found the larger single arch of the Porta Aurea, sometimes called the Arco dei Sergi. It stands alone and displays its fine proportions and decorations without distraction. Many who see the arch will seem to have seen it before—prob-

ably in the drawings of Michael Angelo or Piranesi or Fra Giocondo, for these masters fell in love with Porta Aurea and reproduced it freely.

Pola's chief jewel, however, is its arena, which the Romans built at the water's edge so that the dwellers on the islands and bay shores about Istria might sail directly to its doors and moor in its shadow. With the Colosseum in Rome and the amphitheaters in Verona, Nîmes and Arles, it ranks as one of the five most perfect survivals of this type of ancient structure. It lacks but a fifth of being as large as Verona's amphitheater, and it lacks a third of equaling the circumference of the Colosseum. It is elliptical in form. Its two tiers of arches and its third tier with continuous windows surmounted by a heavy cornice are virtually complete. It is distinguished from other arenas by four towers which interrupt the cincture of arches and are believed to have contained wooden stairways. The interior of the original structure has disappeared, quarried to furnish stone and decorations for castles and churches and palaces on both sides of the Adriatic. Regret for this is diminished a little in the presence of the unique loveliness left thereby. From its center the great circle of continuous arched wall rises with a lightness almost ethereal, making an uninterrupted lace-like pattern of gray and azure intervals. Its stone, washed clean by the rains and winds of centuries, takes the chang-



ing lights of sunrise and sunset, of skies shadowed with storm-clouds or burnished with the unbroken golden light of noonday, with ever-varying tints. At night, under a moon, it has a frank though muted lyricism that gives it the counterfeit of youth.

In leaving Pola the little steamer nosed out of the bay, past the ostrich farms on Brioni Isle, and up the coast amid the intangible grays of a misty sunless dawn. It would seem that Istria had nothing else to offer. Then on the third stop the boat and the sun came simultaneously to the waterside town of Parenzo. It seemed a place of no particular promise, and the unexpected word that there would be a delay of two hours seemed just short of calamitous. But, however eager one may be to sail away on a ship, one is never less eager to leave it again for the mystery of a strange port.

In such circumstances, with a hint from the captain, I went ashore and hunted the church called the Basilica Eufrasiana. Nowhere in Parenzo is far from the water, and the church was revealed almost immediately.

But not before Parenzo itself was. It was full of arresting architectural detail, especially its characteristic houses in the Venetian Gothic and Renaissance styles. And as its history cropped out, that became even more of a surprise, for Parenzo was founded before Rome. To-day it has less than four thousand



citizens, which seems a feeble advance from such an early start. In another way it denotes vitality, for under Venice, only a few hundred years ago, the number of its people shrank to a mere thirty!

The crest of the town's visible interests is, as hinted, in the Basilica. A priest was walking back and forth in its shadow, reading his breviary. From him came the promptings that revealed his remarkable church for what it actually was.

It soon developed that, here on this unexploited Istrian shore, and quite by accident, I had stumbled on one of the oldest churches in existence. It is, moreover, the only Byzantine basilica which survives complete in all its parts. It was built in the middle of the sixth century on the site of a church which had been erected there two hundred years earlier. In type it suggests the basilicas of Ravenna, which are no older. Its façade, its walls, and its pavement are a veritable museum of the earliest Byzantine mosaics, in various degrees of decay.

Asked the date of this basilica, the priestly guide replied: "This is only of the sixth century." The sixth century would have been sufficiently astonishing, but why the "only"? Here at Parenzo, it seems, or at least just outside it, at San Lorenzo, is a church which dates back to the third century, he said; it has Corinthian columns, and antedates the Byzantine period. He offered to walk out to it, but the steamer's

shrill whistle confirmed my excuses of insufficient time, even before they were made. So, with easy detachment, he resumed his walk and the whispering of his office before the mosaics of the aged Basilica, and, reluctantly but gratefully, we left Parenzo and its old churches to the routine of their centuries.

## CHAPTER XV

### TO A TOWN OF A HUNDRED HORIZONS

THE CLAIMS OF ASOLO—CASTELFRANCO—MORNING BELLS—HOLLAND IN ITALY—GIORGIONE AT HOME—HIS MASTERPIECE—ASOLO—PALACE OF THE CYPRIAN QUEEN—PAINTED HOUSES—ROBERT BROWNING AT ASOLO—ELEONORA DUSE'S RETREAT—FROM THE MIRE TO THE STARS—THE PEACE OF SANTA ANNA—ON CASTELLATED HEIGHTS THAT COMMAND HISTORIC HORIZONS

ACQUAINTANCE with Asolo was of slow and unconscious growth. It came modestly, asserting itself at long intervals, but always bringing distinction in its train.

When Catharine Cornaro, who signed herself Queen of Cyprus, Jerusalem and Armenia, gave over her island kingdom to Venice, the island republic gave her Asolo in exchange, and to her other titles she added Lady of Asolo.

Here Robert Browning came as a youth and heard the first echo of Pippa's song: "God's in his heaven, All's right with the world." And he came again, and again, to the last year of his life.

Another queen, uncrowned, the queen of Italy's theater, Eleonora Duse, when overburdened, exchanged her kingdom for the peace of Asolo, and became the latest Lady of Asolo. And when she died in far away America, and her friends brought her home, they brought her back to Asolo.

It is so tiny that the word is easier to find in the dictionary than on a map. It is an Italian word meaning "breath," obviously of fresh air, as the verb *asolare*, derived from it, means "to disport in the open air, amuse oneself at random." There was in it an ingratiating invitation to a holiday. Who would not *asolare*? Why not then to Asolo?

It reluctantly revealed itself, off the railway, between the Brenta and the Piave, on the northern edge of the Venetian Plain half-way up its first rise into a foot-hill of the near-by Alps.

The best advice was to go by train from Venice to Castelfranco, and motor thence the remaining ten miles. And I did, but that train did all it could to take the *asolare* out of the trip. The carriages were of a pattern new some forty years ago, when doubtless they graced a *direttissimo* train on a main line. Now, however, they were far from that estate, having been shunted down the grade, until they had reached this side-line where they did duty on a modest *accelerando*, which in spite of its name is so far from accelerating the transit that it stops at every single one of

the five stations on the way. If the carriages had any springs they had long since lain down on their job, and condemned the bumpers to belie their names so far as to give bumps instead of absorbing them.

The distance was short, however, a mere twenty-five miles, and level over every one of them, so that a little over an hour finished the trip. The outlook was pastoral all the way. The evening twilight shaded out all except the nearer objects, but there was light left to see that the stations were solitary and unsupported by any other buildings, that nowhere en route did the railway touch a single town. It seems to have been laid down equidistant from all the communities it was intended to serve. The time-table indicated by its hyphenated names that each station was intended to serve two of them at a time. They rolled off the crier's tongue with pomp and splendor. I noted Maerne-Martellago, Salzano-Robegano, Noale-Scorze and Piombino-Dese.

The inn at Castelfranco was authentic rural Italian. It let one into untraveled Italy. The rooms were primitive but clean, and the beds were up to the unusual high standard of beds in the peninsular kingdom. The reception-room and bar and office were one, with the kitchen opening frankly on one side of it, and the dining-room a little reticently on the other. One ordered dinner by strolling into the kitchen and looking over the menu there where it was



spread over the kitchen table in the shape of all that the day's market had to offer, while the proprietor-cook and his wife and his mother and his brother-in-law and even his children helped to select it and decide on its cooking.

The dining-room was a cozy retreat of only four tables, with chairs on the side against the wall, so that the diners all sat looking across at each other. One might think it would make for sociability, but it didn't. No one spoke, except to his companion, and then in a muffled voice. The place came to life only with satiety. When the empty plates had all been removed, and coffee and liqueurs poured, and the cigarettes lighted, the company became voluble. No one except the waiter seemed to have any place to go. He collected his modest tips and departed early. The others remained in their places and so spent the evening talking across the crumbs, earnestly and loud, about things wrapped in the mystery of the Venetian dialect, and of course picking their teeth with equal zest and energy.

In the morning the bells of Castelfranco performed the office usually relegated to Chanticleer. They began before daylight and rang up the sun. Thereafter, they rang up the town, and, in relays or altogether, forestalled further sleep during the first hour and a half of daylight. Their endurance suggested that they must be rung by automatic

means. The deep tones of several of the bells indicated splendid bronze champions, but once, when they hesitated, a bell of light timber took up the clamor by itself, and showed that frail bells, like frail people, may often be depended on to absorb a vast deal of punishment. After counting its first one hundred and fifty strokes I gave up, but the bell, or rather its ringer, did not. Abandoning the automatic idea, I visualized a zealous monk in the base of the campanile, at the rope's end, extending his daily dozen to a daily twelve times twelve, or perhaps bending under the bell-rope in his sleep, functioning subconsciously, as weary motor drivers are sometimes said to do at their wheels. It was not surprising later to find an uncommon number of campaniles for a town of so few people.

Flat as the great plain on which it stands, half-way between the lagoons and the Alps, Castelfranco's only division is between the part of it inside and the part of it outside the castled quarter at its center. The once fortified walls, in token of the long peace they have enjoyed, have hung their pink bricks with tapestries of ivy. A bank of grass creeps up to their base. Beyond this green margin runs a canal, beyond the canal a broad street angles round the castle toward which the houses look, screening their eyes with shadowy arcades.

Just there, under the walls, Castelfranco seemed

very like Holland. It is level like Holland, the canal suggests Holland, it is green and clean like Holland, there is evidence of thrift and modest plenty as in Holland, and a good part of the population goes about on bicycles as in Holland. But the marble lion, set in the clock-tower in the castle wall, its wings spread and its paw on the book, reminded that this was territory of the Doges.

The green collar about this older city is interrupted in just one place, and there, rising white against the ivied brick wall, and inverting its own image in the dark canal, is the marble effigy of Giorgione, clad in the charming costume of his period, a superb figure of youthful and poetic genius; and Castelfranco's greatest claim to distinction is revealed, for it was the birthplace and the home of the greatest of all the Venetian painters.

No other Italian painter is honored on so little surviving evidence as Giorgione. There remain less than half a dozen authenticated pictures from his brush. But his method and style permeated the work of his students and of his contemporaries and of other painters in succeeding generations so that he is famous not more for his gallery than for his school.

It is appropriate that his masterpiece should hang here in his own Cathedral of St. Liberalis, though it deserves a better light. This Duomo is found in the heart of the inner town, its modest neo-classic façade

facing a forecourt whose balustrade supports, of all things, a company of pagans, antique Roman sculptures which seem a long way from home in this milieu of what is modern only, or at farthest medieval.

Inside, I could, at first, "scarcely see the forest for the trees." Nothing came out of the darkness but an endless vista of the most unusual confusion of strange pieces of furniture as ever were scrambled, giving the vast nave the appearance of having been abandoned after a riot. They were in fact individual prie-dieux, with an upright to lean on and midway of it a hinged flap which dropped into place as a seat. They at once suggested the noisy and secular diversion made when, after a period of kneeling, the congregation rose and turned these kneeling-benches about on the stone pavement and flopped down the hinged seats and sat upon them. They were of a wood which age and usage had made a light and lustrous and unecclesiastical canary. Out of the tangle, which was without a suggestion of rows or aisles but rather of war and rapine, it was nevertheless a little apparent that the seats of nearly all of the prie-dieux were folded up and out of service, which was, of course, a tribute to the piety of the Castel-frances, since it indicated that the furniture was used mostly for prayer. At the moment no one was in sight and one could have believed the place empty if it were not for the echo coming down the nave from the

canons droning their office under the tapers of a chapel at the other end.

I picked my way through the debris of the last service and found a sacristan to withdraw the curtains which protect the Giorgione. The sun came out accommodatingly at the moment and revealed the details as well as one might expect in such an unfortunate position. The picture is one of the most distinguished pieces of presumably religious painting in the whole Italian gallery, but it is not genuinely religious in any aspect. It is, in fact, much more of an autobiographical foot-note on the profane associations of the painter. There is in the ordered elegance of it a suggestion of the worldly life which Giorgione led among the Venetians in their palaces on the canals and in their country homes here about his own opulent plain. The corner vistas are, in fact, secular scenes out of the painter's own neighborhood. Having chosen to paint the *Madonna and Child*, she nevertheless lacks the maternal instinct and He the suggestion of divinity. The so-called "St. Liberalis" in the lower foreground is an ideal of youthful knightliness which preserves the features of the son of the painter's friend, Tuzio Costanzo. The Madonna, lost in contemplation which takes no account of her Child, is without maternity or adoration. Here beauty is of another kind, representing "the artist's personal sentiment of all that was adorable in the woman he loved." The solitary



religious figure is just St. Francis who seems wholly out of place in the false situation imposed on him and, instead of worshiping the Madonna or her Child, seems to be appealing to the lay observer to excuse his anomalous position.

Giorgione died, it is believed, of a broken heart, betrayed by the beautiful creature he enthroned in his masterpiece, and her name is twice preserved in Castelfranco. It appears in his own written words on the back of this canvas, and it is repeated on the stone tablet in the hand of his marble figure before the castle wall. These simple phrases, which come so lightly and freshly as if from his own lips, have been put into English as:

“Come, Cecilia.  
Come, hurry,  
Thine own one waits for thee, Giorgio.”

The way on from Castelfranco to Asolo led directly north over a shaded white road across a pastoral plain whose beauty was that of simplicity, order, and abundance. The roads here are friendly with carters and drovers, with bicycles and an occasional motor, but not least often with leisurely pairs and groups of walkers. The fields are gridirons of sparkling waters resting a little after their torrential rush from the mountains. The Alps stand against the horizon gray and flat as a painted screen. As one

comes toward them the mountains seem to come down in greeting. The farther approach breaks them up into foot-hills and peaks; the foreground detaches and takes its own depth; and directly ahead is an island, long and high, in the sea of green. On its western tip are the walls of a square castle ruin. Half-way up nests Asolo. It spreads out a welcome of villas and gardens smiling over walls which lose themselves in the overflowing foliage. Then it opens its one street, just wide enough to take a single car, a street which exposes only a little of itself at a time, with a pretense that it is short, but actually long because it bends about in conformity to the hilly contour.

Already one understands Queen Catharine's contentment here. One is not here a day's length without sympathizing with the wealthy Venetians who, lovers of parks and gardens and country life long before the English, for centuries have made Asolo their summer retreat. It is still generous with the peace which Duse found and with the charm which enslaved Browning.

All that is left to epitomize Asolo's day of glory is the towered palace of the Cyprian queen, partly theater now and partly the prison of such heinous malefactors as grape thieves. "I do assure you," wrote Browning, "that after some experience of beautiful sights in Italy and elsewhere I know nothing comparable to the view from the Queen's

tower and palace." It stands midway of the street's length, and looks down on the gardens which were her park or, as she called it, her Paradise. With an empty title and a splendid income, she held her court here, surrounded by her twelve maids of honor, her eighty serving men, her blackamoors, her peacocks and parrots, her apes and hounds; hostess to princes and prelates, artists and poets. To express the ideal pleasantness of the life here, her secretary, Pietro Bembo, historian of Venice and afterward Cardinal, invented the verb *asolare*, and named his celebrated dialogues, on the nature of love, *Asolini*. Catharine left a tradition of her goodness to her handful of subjects which makes their descendants still refer to her as the Good Queen. How well she, too, must have loved Asolo may be inferred from the fact that it is said she left it but three times during two decades, once to visit her brother in Brescia, once to walk across the frozen lagoon into the capital, and a last time when she fled from invading troops. Venice was her refuge and there she died, and the republic buried its daughter, the Island-Queen and Lady of Asolo, with all the splendor at its command.

It was in the company at Catharine's court that Giorgione developed his talent. In this happy experience is found the explanation of the heroic ideals, knightly spirit, and the pastoral and courtly sentiment which distinguish his pictures. He is recalled

here, too, by the façades on the Asolan houses, whose heavy overhanging cornices, gilded and tinted, are not unlike the cornices of the houses of the distant Basque country. These painted fronts, faded as they are, can yet scarcely have been Giorgione's, though they carry on a tradition of this great artist. Down in Castelfranco, however, there is a house, the Casa Pellizari, in the piazza opposite his statue, whose decoration, faded and dim, is claimed as his.

In general the Asolans, with the best intentions and the most affable courtesy, are apt to confuse the casual visitor about Robert Browning's association with their town, for they are not unnaturally confused themselves. The visitor should bring in his kit the steady fact that two Robert Brownings linked up over seventy-five years of that same name's association with Asolo. They were the father-poet and the son-painter.

The elder Browning came here first in 1834, a youth of twenty-two, just decided on a career as poet, and out from England for his introduction to that land of which he ultimately said:

"Open my heart and you will see  
Graved inside of it, 'Italy.'"

Here on this first visit he gathered the ideas and coloring for *Sordello* and *Pippa Passes*. The former poem reflects the world of which Asolo is only a part, but in

the latter the whole action of the play takes place in Asolo. Thereafter the memory of the little town never left him. He confessed that it haunted his dreams, that he would find himself traveling sometimes with a friend and sometimes with a stranger, and suddenly he would see it "sparkling in the sunshine" and he would cry out, "Look! There is Asolo! Do let us go up there!" But, as it goes in dreams, his companion would declare it impossible and hurry him away. But, after he had seen it again in 1878, those dreams came no more. His last visit here was in 1889, the last year of his own life, and it affected him with "a strange buoyancy, an almost feverish joy of life," and he renewed his declaration of love for his earliest Italian sweetheart: "I was right to fall in love with this place fifty years ago, was I not?" In his letters thence he concluded attempts to describe what had delighted him with these words: "but it is indescribable." On this visit he gathered up his last sheaf of poems and, with the memory of Bembo's verb and "for love of the place," he call his swan-song *Asolando*. In the prologue he wrote:

"How many a year, my Asolo,  
Since—one step just from sea to land—  
I found you, loved yet feared you so—  
For natural objects seemed to stand  
Palpably fire-clothed!"

In the narrow street on the soft brown wall above





*Photo by Alinari*

Giorgione's Madonna in the Church at Castelfranco Veneto



The Grave of Eleanora Duse at Asolo

the pointed arches of the long arcade, there is a white tablet, put there by the Asolans on the centenary of the poet's birth, and it recites: "In this house dwelt England's great poet Robert Browning and here he wrote *Asolando*, 1889."

Thereafter his son, Robert Barrett Browning, like the Venetian that he was, though only by adoption, came and made Asolo his summer home. In memory of his father he established the lace industry in the town. When he died here on the centenary of his father's birth, in 1912, he was buried in the village churchyard.

Asolo cherishes its souvenirs, as other tablets indicate, though some of the names honored may not mean so much to a foreigner as they might. However, there is no one who comes here, no matter whence, but will experience an arresting thrill before the house of the Renaissance windows and pallid green door, the house in whose orange wall he finds graven the name of Duse. It is where the long street of several names, having left the piazza beneath the Queen's Tower, dips northward under the Porta Santo Spirito.

It was the last of the homes known by this restless soul who made so many and failed to find peace in any of them. Great artist, gypsy and spendthrift, it was from this house that she, aged and ill, proclaimed her poverty and set out oversea to recoup in

the America which had already been so generous to her. She met the same response as formerly, but she met also the inevitable.

Her funeral procession the length of Italy, from Naples to Asolo, was the culminating national echo of the grateful pride her people felt in the woman who had made their theater famous all over the Western World. At Asolo, however, the cortège laid aside its splendor, and became the simple tribute of fellow townsmen, not for the artist whose triumphs were to most of them only hearsay, but to the sad gray neighbor whose presence among them brought their town a new distinction, to the latest Lady of Asolo.

On the wall of her house, beneath the tablet by which Asolo dedicated it to her memory, a laurel wreath is kept green by an anonymous kindness. The poetic dedication carried above it was written, with quaint impudence it would seem, by the same hand that wrote and sold *Il Fuoco*.

It begins: "*A Eleonora Duse, figlia ultimogenita di S. Marco.*" Thus reminded here, under the walls of this beautifully gardened palace which was her last home, that she was a daughter of Saint Mark, I recalled an earlier pilgrimage, across the lagoon from Venice, to her shoddy first home at Chioggia.

Duse was born in a third-class compartment of a train on which her parents were traveling with a



theatrical company of which they were a part, but her early years were passed in the fishermen's town on the island made by the last sluggish mile of the same River Brenta which breaks out of the mountains, a crystal fountain, just opposite Asolo.

Chioggia revealed itself a miniature Venice gone to seed, picturesque, however, as frowsy and decadent poverty often is. A sight never to be forgotten was its fishing fleet winging home under sails of every kind and color, and marked by the illiterate owners with every imaginable identification except a name, which they seem never to have known how to write. Gathered behind the mole and shot with sunshine, they looked a barnyard full of fabulous chanticleers. In a quiet side street between canals the women of the town sat in the shade, in long rows, weaving white lace and brown seines, their tongues flying faster even than their shuttles. Just there was the street called Duse. However, it was named not for Eleonora, but for her grandfather, who had been an admired improviser of local dialect dramas. There actually appeared to be no tangible souvenir of her in Chioggia. Her childhood here is just tradition. Oppressed by the slimy decadence of the poverty-stricken town, it seems incredible that a jewel such as she should have risen from such stagnant unclean waters. Yet in such waters is the nursery where the oyster mothers the pearl. She traveled far from Chioggia



to nest at last, so near and so high, at Asolo; from the mire to the stars.

From Duse's house at the Porta Santo Spirito in Asolo the way led inevitably to the rim of the town where, on an elevation all its own, is the little Church of Santa Anna, and beyond it, through a delicate shred of cloister to the burying ground, smaller even than the church, a mere God's Eighth-of-an-Acre. Here, on the edge of a cliff overlooking the Venetian plain, in the shade of cypress and pine, screened by a myrtle hedge, is the flat marble panel which marks the grave of the sad and restless nomad.

Beside it one remembers that once the mother of Guy de Maupassant, in the loneliness of the recent loss of her son, was visited in her rose-covered villa by the great Italian actress.

"What can I wish for you?" the older woman asked. "You are at the height of your glory. Nothing more can come to you."

"Peace," whispered Duse. Hers is the peace of Santa Anna. The beauty of Asolo is for other eyes.

Asolo has another name by which it is known to those who have been there long. It is a name which is not understood at once but reveals its aptness only after some acquaintance with the views from its terraces and housetops, and the vistas that delight every time one comes out of the screen of houses into the presence of its nearer hillsides, the plain below or the

mountains above. Only gradually, though inevitably, one grows to know why Asolo is called the Town of a Hundred Horizons.

At the crest above it, where the white remains of the Roman castle stand, one finds these hundred horizons gathered into one which extends from the Alps, with their hoary heads in the clouds, to the misty intangible distance where land and sea and Venice meet. In another direction behind Padua are the Euganean Hills, those solitary cones which crept into so much that the primatists painted. Everywhere are the sites of battles and sieges carried on during the chivalrous but cruel Middle Ages; everywhere are beauties and memories that embroider: on one side, Treviso between the silver lines of the Piave and the Brenta; on the other Palladio's Vicenza, and, nearer, Bergamo of the Condottiere Colleoni and of Donizetti the composer. Cupped in the first foot-hills is the white signal of Canova's Possagno, and in the opposite direction the many towers of Giorgione's Castelfranco marking it a kind of San Gimignano of the plain. Between is a level green sea whose waves are farms and vineyards, groves and orchards, and whose whitecaps are farmhouses and villas, churches and convents. One is too far above to sense movement except of cloud shadows which pass like moods across the sensitive landscape.

There is a choice of times to come even here, and

it is at the Angelus hour. Then the serenity of an impalpable silence is suddenly broken by a choir of uncountable bells bursting into a medley of varied tone and rhythm, yet all proclaiming the mystery of the Ave. Uncountable campaniles, before unnoticed, rise out of the green sea in every direction, tall and slender and white, like lighthouses of a simple credulous faith. And the time to descend is afterward amid the gathering shadows which fold up and preserve one's memories of Asolo.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE GOLDEN POWDER OF PARMA

EVERY LITTLE CITY HAS A MEANING ALL ITS OWN—  
PARMA, WHERE PARMESAN CHEESE COMES FROM—A  
COMIC ITALIAN POSTER—THE CHEESE DAIRY—HOW  
PARMESAN IS MADE—METERS AND MEASURES—ROTELLA  
AND SPINA—THE BIRTH OF THE CHEESE—BRINE BATH  
AND SUN BATH—YEARS OF DRYING AND OILING—  
TESTS—AN EAR FOR CHEESE—THE PERFECT SAMPLE  
AND THE THREE SNIFFERS

WE WERE coming into Parma and the talk was of what the city meant to each of us, for the name of a city has a way of fixing itself in the subconscious so that, in spite of manifold attractions, the mention of it often suggests only a single thing.

A city may indeed be all things to all people, especially to all those who live in it. It may be several things to some people, according to the particular interest behind the ear that takes it in. But it is usually one thing to most people.

So much was agreed, and one of the party epitomized it with the paraphrase of a song of his youth:

"Yes, every little city has a meaning all its own."

Thereupon a test was improvised, and Paris spontaneously produced gaiety; New York, sky-scrapers; Pittsburgh, smoke; Detroit, motor-cars; London, fog; Venice, canals and gondolas; Milan, Cathedral; Naples, bay or Vesuvius; Pisa, leaning tower; and Florence, picture galleries.

As to Parma? The three of us were of three minds. It was to be expected that the Colonel had come only for Correggio. To him Italy meant little besides pictures and their painters; and Correggio was his hobby. His lady, indeed, branded him "in-Correggioble," with an apologetic kiss.

For her own part she stood by her sex. Her interest here was in Napoleon's second wife. She liked to have her history spiced with gossip, and to her Parma represented Maria Louisa in her later somewhat self-indulgent years when Austria gave her this grand duchy to console her for the loss of the imperial crown of France, to which she added other consolations, rather more democratic.

Under challenging eyes I confessed that my reaction to Parma was cheese.

The others raised their eyebrows in surprise, plainly involuntary, and then lowered them gradually in token of understanding. It was only remembering what was already well known to realize that Italy has not only sent its macaroni around the world but



that, after the manner of the cocktail that follows the American flag, Parmesan cheese follows the macaroni.

Under the red-white-and-green it is more in evidence on the dining table than any other cheese, and more prominent even than butter. No Italian table is completely "set" without its vase of *parmigiano*. Elsewhere the fluffy buff powder is used wherever macaroni is eaten, but in Italy it is used whenever almost anything is eaten, anywhere from the humblest *contadino's* hut to the king's table on the Quirinal. It is not only sprinkled over every form of *pasta*, which is the bulk of an Italian's food,—whether taken in the form of macaroni, spaghetti, vermicelli, or any one of the score of fanciful forms that flour and salt and water take under this generic name—but it is sprinkled into soup, and over vegetables and eggs and meat, when cooking, to make a tasty surface. The manufacture of *pasta* is, of course, no longer a peninsular secret. It is made now in nearly every country where it is eaten. But Parmesan cheese comes only from Italy, and there it is made almost exclusively, and certainly best, in the dairies roundabout the city from which it takes its name and which is the natural capital of the industry.

Having taken me to see the Correggios and having considered Maria Louisa in her unchastened maturity, or so much of it as discretion permitted, the

Colonel and his lady felt they had done their whole duty by Parma and set out to study other artists and other ladies in their proper settings and left me to satisfy my appetite or at least my curiosity about cheese.

No one with half an eye for his environment can be long in Italy without noticing a gay poster which celebrates the ravishing effect of a piece of Parmesan on the olfactory organs of three practised gourmets. The dark cake at the center has been raped of an ecru wedge which stands on edge above it. The three connoisseurs, with their gargantuan snouts all but transfixing the delicacy, reveal its supreme quality in the varied expressions of their lips, their cheeks and their bulging worshipful eyes. No one, it is to be presumed, can look upon this humorous masterpiece, without instant conviction that the trade-mark below it stands for the prince of all Parmesan.

At the moment of despair as to how to find this popular cheese in the making, how to have entrée to the rites which transform the milk, as it flows from the full Emilian udders, into the hard black cakes with the golden hearts, I discovered the poster of the three unctuous sniffers just before me. Taking heart in a belief that no other information is so good as the best, I hunted the headquarters of the trade-mark stressed and the way was at once opened to all that hitherto had been both secret and mystery.

The firm dealt only in the completed product, maintaining storehouses and cellars in which the cakes by the thousand were treated, during the first two years of their life, to the oiling which gives their surface its velvety black luster, and then during some fraction of the third or fourth year were tested again and again for the moment when they were ripe for the market, the grater and the palate of the connoisseur.

This firm is made up of brothers, but I was not quite prepared, when I asked of how many, to be told that there were eleven. At the moment a strapping youngster of some nine years appeared on the scene, and wholly for the fun of it I asked whether he were one of the firm, and was further astonished to be told that he was. This clearly required an explanation, which was that when the father of the eleven boys had died he had left the establishment to all of them equally. The five adult sons took charge at once for all, but as each of the minors finishes school and comes of age, he participates in the management. In their case education consisted in completing the courses of the schools in Parma and then of tapering off with a few years divided between a college of business in Italy and afterward another such college in Switzerland.

It was just the evening hour of closing when a visitor with selfish delays might expect to be least

welcome. Yet, with the Italian courtesy which seems to require the native to devote himself to the foreigner without question of time or distance or his own pre-occupation, my desire to see the making of a Parmesan cheese immediately commanded the resources of all the brothers of the firm. I emerged from an animated discussion as how best to gratify my curiosity by being assigned to the attention of the brother whom they called Aldo, with his undivided time and interest.

It did not seem a propitious hour of the day to see the process. Dairying seems a morning function, in the cool freshness of the early hours of sunshine. Nevertheless in less time than it takes to tell, a motor had rushed us through the heart of the city, out the gate of Vittorio Emanuele, and eastward along the air-line of the Via Emilia. It was the same Via Emilia as at Forli and Rimini and all along its unvarying length. At the right were the same Apennines. At the left was the same broad plain with scarcely any variation in altitude, but green and opulent, and flecked with white farmhouses, and alive with the cattle which make it the dairy of Italy. Some were the mouse-colored Swiss breed, some wore the red coats of the Friulian, and many were Podlians, white or gray, and distinguished by the wide reach of their horns. The metals of the railway were not in sight, but an occasional train was, and its

course demonstrated again how the two roads, one of the nineteenth century and the other finished twenty-one centuries before it, parallel each other along hundreds of miles. The Po was just beyond, but invisible, too, in a plain so flat that the horizon seemed yards instead of miles away. And the wonder of it was that this river has banks and keeps them—it holds an inconstant course, to be sure—for here, nearly one hundred miles from the Adriatic toward which it struggles sluggishly its bed is only twenty-five feet higher than its mouth at that sea.

Some ten miles out from the city gate the car found an opening in a long farm wall, entered and came to rest in the courtyard of the cheese dairy—the Italians call it a *caseificio* or *cascina*—which was our objective. The courtyard might have been the piazza of a neighboring village. It was paved throughout, and it was girdled with the walls of the proprietor's house on one side, the milk and cheese houses on another, and the ends of the long low cattle-sheds on the side opposite the gate. Whatever may have been the substance of these buildings, whether dressed stone or brick, concrete or rubble, the surface was plaster-toned by time and weather to an opalescent gray. Their roof-lines wore a fluted cornice of pink tile-ends. Where one of them dipped a little low it let in a burst of green from the trees beyond the courtyard.



After introductions to the padrone, a splendid figure of what a man should be at fifty-five, to his plump wife and to his son, who, though the manager of the farm and dairy, looked a frail and sensitive artist or poet or musician or anything except what he so efficiently was, the business of seeing milk converted into Parmesan seemed as if it were going to begin. Instead, however, of heading for the dairy houses, we passed to the farther side of the proprietor's dwelling, to an open terrace on the edge of gardens and wide stretches of pasture.

What actually began was an hour of gracious hospitality in the soft glow of a fading Italian sunset. It began with chairs and compliments, with wine and cakes, a critical discussion of the wine and the bringing of other vintages to sample and compare, a leisurely smoke and much friendly talk of which most was about their visitor's country and very little was about cheese. However, when that topic was reached it was immediately wrapped in regrets that the making of it, as my intuition had suggested, was a morning function and that we had not come at that time of day. But Signor Aldo knew that as well as they did and explained that he had come only to ask a welcome for us early on the morrow.

And so it was that we were received as old friends when we returned shortly after sunrise. The cattle, healthy and well groomed, were munching their

breakfast in their long sheds, sheds so standardized with modern details that the Italianism of the place almost entirely fell away. It might have been anywhere had it not been for the brown eyes and olive cheeks—a little ruddy with the winter's breath of the Alps—and the perfect white teeth of the milkers who were emptying the full udders.

In a country where there are nearly half as many goats as there are other milch cattle, it was natural to wonder if Parmesan were not made in part of goats' milk or even sometimes wholly so. But assurance was given definitely that in this neighborhood, at least, no milk other than that of a cow goes into the preparation of this cheese.

The cows were left behind as we went into a dark, spacious, cool room near by in which there were large shallow trays of zinc filled with the results of the milking of the preceding night. The surface was a rich ecru with the risen cream. Deftly this was skimmed off and it was taken to the churning-room to be transformed into butter. The chalk white residue of milk was drained off and carried in another direction, into the great room where our interest was to center, the room whence it would leave only as a new-born cheese, to be nursed and tended like a new-born babe until it should attain a strong and hearty maturity.

This chamber had none of the pastoral character

of the rest of the *cascina*. Metal, bell-shaped cauldrons lined the room. The floor was covered, by platoon, with cans of milk. There were tables of chemicals, and of small containers with graduated lines to mark cubic contents, and of hand-tools such as are found only where cheese is made. The walls and ceilings were an irregular pattern of pipes which at intervals broke out in valves and taps, gages and meters. In a corner was the grimy face of a furnace, the secret of its glowing center let out of damper slits or through chinks where doors were imperfectly joined, and it announced its mission, which was to make steam, by putting such a pressure of heat on its boiler that some of the weaker joints in the pipes and valves hissed gently. This room unmistakably was a scientifically controlled laboratory.

The cauldrons, resembling inverted bells, stood six feet high with a diameter of two feet at each closed base and of eight feet at the open top. The outsides were an ebon black, the insides were polished to such a degree that they all but mirrored those who looked into them. Their lips were not thin like the metal of a melodious bell, however, but thick and beveled, for these bells have two distinct metal surfaces, one on the inside and the other on the outside, and between them is a vacuum, a thermal chamber into which the steam is introduced.

The making of the cheese was begun in one caul-

dron at a time, but as one after another came into operation, the excitement of the situation increased, and the process was so exact, and so similar in each, that watching a single cauldron, which was all that was possible in such an engaging scene, sufficed for one to understand the transformation going on in all of them.

In this dairy ninety cows yielded between twelve and fifteen quintals of milk a day. All of it went into the making of Parmesan. Only the evening yield of milk was skimmed. The morning's milk was used as it came from the cows. A mixture, half and half, of the skimmed and unskimmed milk, was put into a cauldron up to within a few inches of its thick lip. To this were added two buckets of whey carefully saved from the preceding morning's operation. The mixture was completed farther along in the process with the addition of a quart of water into which, after the most scrupulously exact measurement by a special spoon, was introduced rennet powder to a quantity which seemed the equal of about two teaspoonsful. The cauldron eventually contained seven hundred and seventy pounds of milk, thirty-six pounds of whey and one quart of rennet-water. In the end the entire residuum of one cauldron's contents produced one Parmesan cheese measuring seven inches in thickness and eighteen inches in diameter.

Milk and metal met at first at their natural

temperatures. A valve was then thrown open and the steam rushed into the thermal space surrounding the liquid. A thermometer was placed in the milk and left submerged, for nothing here is allowed to chance or conjecture.

Up to this time a pleasant social atmosphere had pervaded the big room. But chatting and joking and loud talking now ceased. Obviously a series of critical moments was approaching, moments watched for with alert and practised eyes, and acted on with prompt expertness.

After the milk was submitted to heat there was an intermittent stirring by means of a *rotella*, an eight-foot pole with a wooden disk the size of a dinner plate at its submerged end, but the stirring became constant as the thermometer recorded the liquid's rising temperature. One man watched this detail with one hand on the thermometer and the other on the steam valve. When the temperature of the milk had reached forty-five degrees Fahrenheit several things happened. The stirring stopped and the *rotella* was withdrawn. All steam was immediately, though only momentarily, cut off. At the same time the quart of rennet-water was added to the milk to hasten its coagulation.

During every minute of the succeeding twelve or fifteen the progress of coagulation was tested by plunging a shallow, sharp-edged, wooden dish into



the mixture to note when that implement would stand alone. It was exciting to see it topple a little more slowly each time, until there came a time when the stiffened liquid held it perpendicular.

Then another attendant—for each appeared to be an expert in his own nice way—took the shallow dish and with it cut up the surface by ever so delicate plunges of its sharp edge. Soon a point was reached when a hand was plunged into the changing mass, and it brought up a cake of solid but sensitive trembling ivory. Its edges had achieved sharpness.

Thereafter the dish was supplanted by the *rotella* which entered the heart of the hardening mixture and, as it gently broke it up, the surface surged with wavelets of increasingly fine white flakes suspended in a greenish yellow mixture of whey. The separation had begun.

Six minutes had passed since rennet and heat had been working their effect. The temperature was raised to fifty-seven degrees. The attendant with the *rotella* gave place to an attendant with a device something like it, but this one was called a *spino*, and, instead of a wooden disk at its end, it had a cluster of rigid loops of wire. With this the coagulated mass was cut up to the very depth of the cauldron; and the white curd was cut and recut until, as it hardened, the *spino* had pulverized the entire mass.

The temperature went up to seventy-nine degrees.

Not for a moment did the stirring cease. But the degree of stirring and the degree of heat united in one of the fine points of the process. The great cauldron looked like a boiling tureen of fine rice and cream.

After nine minutes, as the end approached, other tests of the solidifying curds were made. A bare hand was thrust into the hot mass and emerged with the kernels and squeezed them between finger-tips. When the proper consistency was observed a signal was given, and more steam was let in.

The hand began to bring out tiny lumps which, on subsequent plunges, appeared larger and larger until a handful of the tightening curd was removed and squeezed into the appearance of a robin's egg of soft rubbery white. It was offered as an embryonic sample of cheese, to be tasted, and it was sweet and toothsome, but not tender.

For a moment the thermometer was sent to fifty-two degrees. Thirteen minutes had passed. The hand offered a sample which satisfied. The end had come.

The steam was cut off, the thermometer was withdrawn, wooden dish, *rotella* and *spino* were put aside. Left alone the agitated surface quieted into a pale green-and-buff calm. Somewhere beneath the opaque whey millions of rice flakes were settling and uniting toward the ultimate single unit, a round, soft, solid mass of cheese. During nearly a quarter of an hour it was left untouched to work its own miracle.

With less tension, other preparations went forward. Several buckets of the hot new whey were withdrawn, tenderly, with as little motion as possible, and set aside to unite with the fresh milk on the morrow in the next making of cheese, forming from day to day a link, as it were, between all the makings, each contributing some of itself to the next.

One attendant brought a fine burlap sheet measuring a yard wide by two yards long, and draped it over the edge of the cauldron, while another attendant plunged his two arms into the whey up to his armpits and gently pressed down the sediment. When his arms could no longer reach he withdrew them and with a long-handled wooden spade further assisted the sinking sediment to gather and adhere. He scraped the cauldron's sides, loosened the unseen mass from any contacts, and delicately pressed it together. Rolling it about in the cauldron's depths he gradually rolled it toward the surface. Expertly the burlap sheet was let into the whey and manipulated under the soft cake which was rolled skilfully back and forth to give it a smooth contour, and was drawn to the surface and swung out, a great lump, as large as a bushel, a Parmesan at last in its first ever so slightly solidified form.

It was refreshing to leave the boiling cauldrons and go into another room whither the fledgling cheese was carried in its improvised hammock of burlap.

There it was cool, and the sibilant steam was quieted, the water trickled from many taps, and there were deep trays of brine.

A wooden hoop, with the circumference of the ultimate cake, received the unformed cheese which, however, rose inches above its edges. The excess bulk was water. A square granite block was set on it to squeeze as much of the liquid out as would compress the cheese into its final form. An hour was sufficient. Then the stone was lifted off, the hoop was taken away, the burlap was unswathed, and the cheese stood revealed, normal in its proportions, delicately firm and faintly yellow as the wing of a canary.

The last I saw of it, as other new cheeses came from the other cauldrons to take their shaping, it was slipped into its bath of brine, and it was surprising to discover that the unwieldy hulk was lighter than water. It floated.

As the brine bath would last for fifteen days, and the other operations in the *cascina* were but the repetition of what had already been seen, the padrone took us into other rooms to see his stock of cheeses of various ages and at various stages.

There was a trough where the fifteen-day olds, newly from the brine, were given a five-hour bath in "sweet water," and in an adjacent portico were other such newly sweetened cheeses taking a cleansing sun-bath. That was the last that they would see of such





A Popular Italian Poster Advertising Parmesan Cheese





Parma

In the foreground the Monument to Giuseppe Verdi



Roncole

The house in which Giuseppe Verdi was born

light, for after it they were put on wooden shelves in the *cascina* storehouse where they would stay a year, ripening. But during this period cheeses would not be without attention. As all the water was not yet out of them every three or four days each cheese would be turned over. During this period their surface would develop a mold, and this would be carefully scraped or brushed off every seven days. The process is called *raschiatura*.

At the end of eight months the maturing cheese is given its first dressing. It is painted with a combination of *terra d' ombra* and cornmeal, but only once. Thereafter it is repeatedly painted with special vegetable oils until it is ready for use.

The hospitable proprietor would not let us go until we had all returned to his terrace and his wife had served a collation of wine, fruit, stout Italian bread and a cutting of his own perfected Parmesan. He said that there is a quality in the grass of Emilia, which it receives from the soil, which gives the native *parmigiano* a quality that can not be duplicated; and under such delightful circumstances, and enjoying that particular piece of Parmesan, it was easy to believe it.

Still smacking the tang of it, we drove up the Via Emilia again, through the city gate, and off to see Aldo's show, which was the eleven brothers' storehouse of cheeses, yearlings, at least, and older, wait-

ing the connoisseur's word that they were ready to go out into the world and grace a gourmet's table.

At the *cascina* there had been enormous Parmesan cakes by the hundred. Here there were cheeses by the thousand; tiers of them, aisles of such tiers, rooms of such aisles, many stories of such rooms. And every cheese presented a sleek black coat from the continuous oiling.

The potential life of a Parmesan is four years. Its first year is spent in the *cascina*. Thence it goes to the warehouse of the wholesale cheesemonger. There it must stay from one to a little more than two years, ripening under the oil treatment, and watched and tested for the day of its maturity. No Parmesan is considered fit to eat under two years, for it has not dried and ripened sufficiently, and it has not begun to get its own precious particular flavor. Nor, on the other hand, is it fit to eat after four years.

During its second and third years it is therefore the object of the most solicitous and continuous attention. It requires long experience to be an expert on the state of a Parmesan's preparedness.

That is known first not by the eye or the nose or the tongue, but by the ear. It is told by the tone. The expert, therefore, must have "an ear for cheese." The test is made with a little silver hammer. The tester raps the cake, and if it gives no resilient tone the cheese is not ready. But as it is nearly or wholly dry it rings under the hammer like a tuning-fork,

and the expert's ear gets a definite message from the heart inside the sable skin.

The last degree of discrimination between all the cheeses which "ring right" is attained by searching a sample from the very core of each of them. This is done with a long steel skewer, slender as a darning-needle, and delicately threaded for some distance from its end. It is screwed into the cheese and withdrawn directly, and, according to the distance it is driven in, the samples of the cheese in the thread tell the condition of the cake at that distance from the surface,

Somewhere in his cheese arsenal, Aldo and his expert tested unnumbered cakes to produce such a sample as they would admit represented Parma's product at its *n*th degree. The expert rapped a perfect symphony out of the varying-toned cakes. When his ear had made choice of several of the best, he drove his needle to their hearts and from one of them, at last, it came tipped with a sample that was judged perfection. He held it up triumphantly and our three noses sniffed it at just the same angles as the three comic noses of the sniffers on the famous poster; and the aroma was so delicately right that no doubt our lips pursed and our eyes bulged just as worshipfully as theirs.

Since I've seen Parmesan made in one of its own Emilian dairies, and racked in storage, and tested, it has never tasted the same to me. Always better.

## CHAPTER XVII

### VERDI'S COUNTRY

THE COMMUNE OF BUSSETO—RONCOLE—WHERE VERDI WAS BORN—THE PARISH CHURCH WHERE THE GREAT COMPOSER FIRST PLAYED THE ORGAN—WOOING A SPINET WITH A HAMMER—THE TOWN OF BUSSETO—VERDI'S FIRST COMPOSITIONS—HIS MÆCENAS—WHERE THE FIRST OPERAS WERE COMPOSED—A BUSSETO PADRONA—VILLA OF SANT' AGATA—WHERE THE LATER MASTERPIECES WERE COMPOSED

THE melodies of Verdi seem to express the soul of Italy. One hears them in all sorts of places, at all times, in the throats of those in every condition of life. Men and women and children even who can not read or write hum "La Donna e mobile" out of *Rigoletto*, and chant the "Miserere" out of *Il Trovatore*, and trill the gay waltz song of *La Traviata*, or, full throated, sing Radhames' apostrophe to his *Celeste Aïda*. Where several are gathered together, and that social instinct known as close harmony manifests itself, it is often as not the "Anvil Chorus" or the quartette from *Rigoletto* engages the singers. Nearly



any one will recognize these strains, but there are endless others in the Italian throat and if you ask what they may be, the answer is astonishingly often a name from the long list of Verdi's creations.

How long a list it is may be visualized by an ambitious memorial at the railway gate of Parma, erected in 1913, on the centenary of the great composer's birth. It takes the form of a covered semi-circular colonnade rising at its center into a triumphal arch. Against the pilasters supporting the lesser arches of the splendid hemicycle are statues of the protagonists of each of Verdi's operas. In all there are twenty-eight figures, one for each opera.

In so honoring him, Parma proudly reminds the visitor that Giuseppe Verdi was born in the province of Parma, of which that city is the capital, and all his life remained a citizen of it.

His *paese* was the commune of Busseto twenty miles northwest of Parma. Here at one end of a line about five miles long is Roncole, the village where he was born and first disclosed his musical genius. Half-way its length is the town of Busseto, where his genius began to manifest itself and received its first recognition. At its northern end is the isolated villa of Sant' Agata, his last home, where he composed all his later masterpieces. This shrine of Verdi's souvenirs is swallowed up in the flat immensity of the plain of the Po. It is swallowed, too, in a kind of

obscurity and inaccessibility, unexploited and off all beaten paths.

A motor-coach set us down before a roadside tavern on either side of which a few houses stretched along the road to make a village. There was apparently nothing about the place to distinguish it from hundreds of others, until the chauffeur said, "This is Roncole." Divining the only reason why any stranger would come there, he pointed across the road to the long low roof-line of one of the humblest of the village houses and added, "That is the house where Verdi was born."

Passing through the green hedge which surrounds it and past a bust of the composer, one finds memorial tablets at the door, but otherwise the old brick dwelling is unadorned except by a devotion which preserves it just as it was that October tenth in 1813, from which time dates its distinction.

A family occupies the house, and generally only one room is exhibited. It is at the top of a narrow brick staircase and is no more changed than anything else about the village storekeeper's house since the evening his spinner-wife gave birth to the boy whose fame has girdled the earth. The floor of it is paved with brick as is every other room in the house. The white ceiling rests on black hewn beams. On the wall is a bronze memorial plaque, a framed picture of Verdi, and many wreaths.

The windows look out toward the village church. It is an humble little temple with all the essential lines of greater ones but shrunken and reduced to the least common denominator of a church. Its interior is without a single artistic distinction, neither panel nor carving, neither fresco nor altar-piece, a peasant church which the artists passed by. Its walls are calcimined a mildewed azure, the altar is decked with faded trumpery as of a feast long since given and forgotten. There are a few skeletons of pews. The names stenciled on them are a directory of Roncole, and among them is the name of Maria Verdi to attest that the famed family still carries on here.

In the first year after Verdi's birth the Austrians and Russians overran this plain in their pursuit of the French. The Italians were the real victims as is any people in the path of war. The pursuers pillaged, burned and murdered without restraint. News of their advance toward Roncole spread terror in the parish. The women knew what they might expect if they remained in their homes, so they gathered their children and sought the sanctuary of their little church, believing that there at the altar they would be immune. In this they reckoned without knowledge of the ferocity of the invaders who, after they had ransacked the houses, forced their way into the church and left its floor reddened with the blood of their victims. One woman, however, bearing her

baby in her arms, had, under cover of the confusion and terror, escaped into the belfry stairway up which she climbed to hide at the top in breathless dread and apprehension. It was in this way that she and her baby escaped the massacre. It is already guessed that the woman was the wife of the Roncole store-keeper and the baby she had miraculously saved was thus spared to become the future glory of music.

That was a detail of the child's destiny. The church contains, however, the one biographical souvenir in Roncole of Verdi's own activity as musician. High on the wall at the left of the altar hangs an inconspicuous shallow balcony. Above it rises a narrow bank of slender silver pipes. There as a boy of ten Verdi began his career as village organist.

This organ, however, was not his first instrument. As a child he had listened with such rapture to the fiddling of an itinerant musician who frequently played before his father's shop that the man begged the shopkeeper to give the boy a chance to study music, and so with such inspired advice became his first Mæcenas. The father, who made many other sacrifices for the education of his boy, bought an old spinet from a neighboring priest and it was on this crude instrument that the lad first wooed the muse who was later to reward him with a niche in her pantheon, and it remained through his whole life one of his most precious possessions.

He began his wooing by nearly destroying the means of it. The story is that one day the lad at the spinet "fell into a kind of joyous stupefaction" when his fingers stumbled by chance on the perfect chord of C Major. But he did not know how or where to find it again. Next day he spent himself in a kind of agony of futile groping that ended in a fit of resentment at the innocent instrument which would not give him its secret. With a hammer he tried to beat out of it the chord his fingers could not coax. His father thereupon transferred the chastisement, by way of example, from the keyboard to the boy.

Beyond these souvenirs of his birth, of his survival of the massacre, of his first musical activity, and of his outburst of artistic temperament, Roncole has nothing else of Verdi to offer, unless it is that the silent village provides some understanding of how an artist brought up here might ever after have a love of solitude.

The way led thence, by an easy walk over the road, to Busseto a scant three miles away. Every step of it had been familiar to Verdi. Over it, during his seven years at school in Busseto, from his eleventh to his eighteenth year, he trudged back and forth weekly to play the organ for Sunday mass and vespers in Roncole, with occasional additional trips to play for a wedding or a funeral, or a feast-day at the inclusive fee of one hundred francs a year.



The narrow strip of flat country on either side of the road appeared, the day I passed, more alive than the village. The frequent dwellings indicated how small were the farm units, just as their size indicated the large family units. Some of the houses were decorated with crude but cheerful frescoed pictures and the design on one of them masqueraded very prettily the number of real windows in the building. The unadorned barns were frankly of brick laid in a fretted pattern under the eaves in such a way that admitted light and air to the grain. Sometimes the pattern work, in which the Italian masons of this plain are so expert, broke the side walls into tall windows, and alternating brick and space gave the effect of mullioned glass, and raised these shelters of horses and cows and other domestic creatures to a kind of counterfeit of Gothic chapels.

It was drowsy early summer and the dark husky peasants were in the fields garnering the first harvest. For the most part they were bronzed Amazons making war on the ripened crop with scythes and sickles, while some of the men drove the hay to rick or barn and others made taut the festoons of vines swung between fruit trees and sagging under newly ripe grapes. The bees buzzed about the flower cups at the roadside and the birds were rather restless and garrulous overhead.

In the flat country the orchards were high enough

to block out distance, so that if Busseto had not had a belfry or two, signaling across the treetops, one would come upon it unawares. It is a long narrow town with one well articulated street which cuts through its heart and lays bare little else of interest that is not about Verdi. It has its history, but in all other items it is without any distinction that it does not share with hundreds of other Italian towns larger and smaller. As the scene of Verdi's development as composer, however, it is unique, a shrine toward which every lover of music must turn with interest and veneration.

Properly enough Busseto's main street is now called the Via Verdi. It was the street he knew longest and best, and in the houses and churches along its way he found his calling, and developed his genius, and composed some of his masterpieces.

Little Giuseppe Verdi first appeared in Busseto's street, whatever its name may then have been, in his eleventh year. He had received a few lessons from the organist of Roncole and his father placed him in the home and care of a cobbler so that he might get some general education at a worthy school and study music with an organist named Provesi, a cultivated gentleman and a learned and practical musician who composed operas as well as masses and had them performed, too, in the theater and churches of Busseto. At this time the height of expectation

for the boy seems to have been a career as a provincial organist.

After two years in Busseto, however, the first evidence of destiny began to manifest itself. He came to the attention of one of the leading citizens, Antonio Barezzi, a rich man and a distinguished musical amateur at whose house the local Philharmonic Society held its meetings, under the direction of Provesi. Barezzi made young Verdi welcome in his home, and with Provesi inducted the lad into the meetings of the Philharmonic. Under such influences, between Barezzi and Provesi, the youth began to find himself.

He began merely by playing in the Philharmonic and occasionally doing bits of copying and transcribing under his maestro's direction. After three years he had made such progress that Provesi declared he had nothing more to teach the boy, and to him at that time is attributed the prophecy that his pupil would become a great master. Provesi was growing old and wished to retire and in preparing to do so he called Verdi to his assistance and placed the director's baton in the hands of his pupil, then only approaching his sixteenth year.

As conductor of the Philharmonic Verdi began to compose pieces which he scored for the orchestra and directed in their performance. Among these, according to a later compilation, were "marches for

band up to a round hundred; perhaps as many short symphonic pieces, which served for the church, for the theater, or for the concert room; five or six concertos or airs with variations for the pianoforte, which he performed himself at concerts; many serenades, cantatas, airs, a vast number of duets, trios, and various works for the church, among which is a *Stabat Mater*."

Barezzi supplemented Provesi in the recognition of the youth's talents by providing him with every practical means to advance. He secured him a modest fellowship from the town and supplemented it with the necessary additional funds and sent young Verdi, in his eighteenth year, up to Milan to study counterpoint. Within two years the good Provesi died. Thereupon Busseto called Verdi back as communal organist and director of the Philharmonic. Barezzi invited him to live in his house where it was but a matter of a few months of daily contact with his daughter Margherita for the young people to fall in love and marry. They had five happy years divided between Busseto and Milan, during which time she bore him two children.

During this period, in their own home in Busseto, in addition to many other minor works, he composed his first operas: *Oberto*, *Conte di San Bonifacio*, which they had the satisfaction of seeing produced on the stage of La Scala in Milan, and *I Due Foscari*

which was produced later at the Argentina in Rome. Life began to look radiant for the young composer when suddenly in the spring of 1840, within two months, he was called upon to endure the deaths of his wife and both their babies.

Thereafter, his expanding career led him to many parts of Europe, but, though solitary and alone, his heart remained fixed in the *paese* of his youth. He still thought of Busseto as his home and he sought its seclusion again, and perhaps he found an inspiration there, for it was in Busseto that he composed *Stiffelio*, *Rigoletto* and *Il Trovatore*.

In 1849 he bought a country place, only two miles north of town, called Sant' Agata, and there, with the second Madame Verdi, he made his only permanent home for the ensuing forty-two years until his death. In this retreat, under the shade of great trees and surrounded by green fields, far from the disquieting disturbances of the cities, he wrote nearly all his later works.

The Via Verdi receives one into cool arcades and conducts one directly to the piazza. Here for your refreshment, you may take your choice of sides, as it were with the Guelphs of the Caffè Centrale on one corner or with the Ghibbelines of the Trattoria del Teatro across the square. We sided with the Guelphs not from any political preference or prejudice but because the Caffè was nearer and shadier than the Trat-



toria, and the end of this walk from Roncole found both of these factors. When satisfied appetite allowed curiosity to range beyond the emptied dishes, the waiter answered questions about the buildings flanking the square in compass terms so unusual that for the moment they quite eclipsed the objects indicated. What he said, Anglicized, was:

"We are in the Communal Palace here at noon; that is the citadel at evening; there is the church of Saint Bartholomew at morning; and opposite us is the ancient palace of the marquises of Pallavicino at north."

Why his figure failed him at the finish was unexplained. Surely to abandon it for "at north" seemed not so proper nor so pretty as to have completed it with "at night."

There was no need to ask who sat in the square, enthroned on the pedestal before the clock-tower of the castle. The modest attitude of the figure would alone have indicated Verdi, who never presented himself in person in any other way. Every other community in Italy which has felt itself able to afford a statue in its piazza seems to have reared one to the first of the Kings Victor Emanuel who, in spite of his patriotic and political significance to united Italy, surely of all kings, if not of all men, presents figure and features least adapted to the permanence of marble and bronze. The people of Busseto, however,

able to afford but one statue, dedicate it to their own distinguished son and hold him in permanence here at the heart of the little town he loved as home.

Prepared for elaborate directions I asked the way to the house of his Mæcenæ, Antonio Barezzi, and was a little surprised to have it pointed out across the Via Verdi, immediately in sight on the east or morning side of the piazza, just where the maestro in bronze might himself contemplate it indefinitely.

Unless attention were called to this house, it would be scarcely distinguishable from the others which line both sides of Busseto's main street. Its façade is uniform in height with those on either side of it and reaches out like them over the foot pavement to the street's edge. Four arches, which appear but a continuation of the arcade extending all along the thoroughfare, support the three upper stories whose sparsely windowed spaces are unadorned except for two details. There is a delicately wrought iron balcony above the two middle arches, and above one end of it is a marble tablet bearing a bronze medallion which recites the details of the distinction which came to the house.

The doorway was closed but the woman in the adjacent shop assured me that Signora Galletti, who is a granddaughter of Verdi's good friend, and hence a niece of Verdi's wife, was very amiable about admitting visitors. She sent her own little girl up-stairs

with my card. The girl came back with complete confirmation of her mother's assurance, in an invitation to ascend.

The house, like so many Italian town houses, had no external individuality, but this quality developed the moment the great door opened on the paved hallway and it rose in distinction as the great stairway mounted. Signora Galletti and her husband received me in their main salon, a room sixty feet long and forty feet wide and with walls rising over twenty feet to the ceiling. It was put under the immediate suspicion of being the scene of the Philharmonic meetings, the laboratory of Verdi's first experience with an orchestra and its scores, the theater where his first compositions (including the hundred marches!) were rehearsed, and the room in which he first raised a maestro's baton.

Such indeed it was, and though it carries on now as the somewhat vast sitting-room of a quiet middle-aged couple, they revere it for its traditional values and preserve there some precious souvenirs of the genius who made their house historic.

At one side was an old piano, a miniature grand, of light wood, bearing the medallion of Tomaschek of Vienna. "He played on it," said my hostess tenderly and softly brushed dust, which seemed not to be there, from the keys on which, she added, her uncle-composer had improvised sketches of some of the airs

which afterward made the whole world sing. The ivories were yellow with age and they were worn deep. It had been no mere ornament, but rather friend and servant in a house of musicians.

On one wall was an oil portrait of Antonio Barezzi, who made his house the home, too, of the youthful organist of Roncole. He appears to have been a man of large frame, erect and vigorous, even in maturity. The silver in his full shock of hair was brushed across a broad high brow which suggested the front of an intelligent imagination. The large lateral spaces from temple to chin, the defined square jaw-bone, the straight large nose all indicated a strength that was tempered by the tenderness of the soft brown eyes looking directly out from under dark bushy brows. It was the portrait of a firm and friendly stalwart.

Underneath it, in its own frame, was, in the composer's own autograph, the dedication of the opera *Macbeth*, which translated, read:

"My Dear Father-in-Law: I have always had it in my thoughts to dedicate an opera to you, who have been my father, my friend, and my benefactor; up to the present time imperious circumstances have prevented me. Now that I am able, I dedicate to you my *Macbeth*, which is one of my favorite works. The heart offers; may the heart accept.

"Your very affectionate  
"Giuseppe Verdi."

On another wall was the only surviving portrait of Barezzi's daughter Margherita, whose beauty is all but eclipsed by the caparisons of her period, choking scarfs and billowing sleeves, and severe puffs of hair which extend her face its own width on either side, and a vast florid comb which doubles its height. Yet somehow her young face comes through it all, beautiful and distinguished, easily imagined to have inspired the affection of the poor boy whom her father "discovered." Underneath her picture is a portrait of Verdi at the time of their marriage. Already at twenty-two he had grown the beard which ever after gave its own character to the lower half of his countenance.

After exhibiting these youthful pictures my hostess disappeared and returned with an armful of other treasures. First she released from its wrappings a delicate gold band, rarely shown. It was the ring young Giuseppe Verdi placed on Margherita Barezzi's finger the day they were married. The delicate and sentimental value of this object quite discounted the documentary importance of her grandfather's diary recording the activity of the Philharmonic Society under its precocious young leader, not to mention even programs of their concerts bearing the first appearance of the name Verdi as composer.

At the rear of the house she opened the "green room, or "Verdi's room," as the name plate read.



But entering we found a whole suite of three rooms which seemed small only after coming from the Philharmonic chamber. One of these was his first bedroom, but later the entire suite was his. The windows look down on a lovely, quiet, inner court roofed with just a patch of azure. Here in his study he put his first compositions on paper, and though he had said that he wrote several of his early operas here, only *I Due Foscari* was definitely named.

In leaving I assured myself of the spelling of my hostess' name and when her husband wrote it carefully out, Carolina Barezzi Galletti, he dissolved the formalities of parting in a hearty laugh by recalling that she was the daughter of the *Marchese di Trombone* (the Marquis of the Trombone), a nickname by which Verdi had always called his brother-in-law, in recognition, perhaps complimentary, perhaps a bit jokingly, of his accomplishments with that sliding bit of brass.

At the end of the eighteen-forties Verdi spent much time in Paris and London overseeing the productions of his operas there. When he returned to Italy, he came to Busseto, but not to the Casa Barezzi. He sought to maintain absolute isolation and secluded himself in the Palazzo Orlandi.

It was not so hospitable as the Casa Barezzi the day I was there. Quite the contrary, it was shut up tight as if genius, not to be disturbed, were still ful-

minating within. The efforts of the entire neighborhood failed to rouse the occupants. Doubtless they were away from home. It is not unbecoming that it should retain a little of the mystery which Verdi gave it. When Boito sought anecdotes or any detail of Verdi's mode of living here, he was told that none survived. And so the great house carries a history of only eight words: here Verdi wrote *Stiffelio*, *Rigoletto* and *Il Trovatore*; which is to say that it was the nursery of two of the most melodious and popular operas which came from one man's pen.

*Rigoletto* was written and orchestrated here within forty days. Such a *tour de force* may not compare with Rossini's composition of *The Barber of Seville* in thirteen days or Donizetti's composition of *The Elixir of Love* in fourteen, but it is none the less an extraordinary example of inspiration and accomplishment which maturer reflection had nothing to add to or change. And Verdi had a sound appreciation of what he had done, as they still illustrate in Busseto.

In this house took form that charming assembly of notes which all the world has known and sung ever since as “La Donna e mobile.” When he put *Rigoletto* in rehearsal at the Fenice Theater in Venice, and the fourth act was under way, the tenor, who was to sing the Duke, complained that a piece which he was to sing was wanting in the manuscript.

"There is plenty of time," said Verdi, "I will give it to you."

The same complaint and the same reply were made day after day in spite of the tenor's increasing anxiety. Finally the day before the orchestral rehearsal the composer drew the tenor into a private room and handed him a sheet of paper. On it he read the *canzone*, "La Donna e mobile." He was enchanted. But Verdi swore him to secrecy, not to sing, not even to hum or whistle the melody out of rehearsal. Then when the maestro gave the score of it to the musicians of the orchestra he swore them to the same secrecy. He feared so facile and melodic an air would spread over Venice, and either that it would be stolen or that it might in advance become so familiar that he would be accused of plagiarism, and he wished, moreover, to secure for it the full success of surprise. He was right. The popularity of this aria was instant and complete, and the measure of it has never decreased.

At the end of the Via Verdi where the countryside comes up to the town was Busseto's most recommended inn. It greeted me in the person of its landlady shelling peas at the front door where she lost nothing of the world as it wagged, that is to say so much as wagged her way. She made up in the effusiveness of her greeting for what her modest little tavern lacked in nearly every other respect. Fatigue

seasoned the refreshment which she later served, and when she had ranged the dishes in a tempting semi-circle, and sat herself down opposite, beaming hospitality across the table, it seemed here was a chance to ask questions. So it was and the questioning began forthwith.

But she got the start and maintained her advantage, and when she had done I seemed not to have a confidence left, my entity as a traveler was stripped naked. She should have been a journalist or better still a lawyer; at cross-examination she would have bankrupted a witness of every shred of secrecy.

When she had exhausted my information she turned on her own. After a score of questions to which the answer was yes, she reached the theater.

"You have not seen the Teatro Verdi? No? Oh, how beautiful. It is just there in the piazza in one corner of the citadel. To be sure it is not so big as La Scala, but *per bacco*, Busseto is not so big as Milan. Still, it is large enough.

"In 1926, when the great maestro had been dead for twenty-five years, Toscanini brought all the artists from La Scala, all the musicians to the last one, all the scenery, and here in Verdi's theater in Busseto directed a gala performance of *Falstaff*. Musicians and journalists came from all over Europe. Not a tenth of all who came to honor Verdi could

crowd into the theater. And imagine, I have but twelve rooms!

"While in Busseto, Toscanini came many times to eat here. Where did he sit? Just there, where you are sitting, that very chair!" and one glowed a little, even while recognizing to what lengths this facile woman might stretch her tongue and the truth in order to please.

"Stabile, 'Falstaff' himself, sat just here at the end," she added, and forthwith she peopled the room with "Nym" and "Bardolph," "Caius" and "Fenton," "Ford" and "Page," as well as their merry wives, and all the familiars of Windsor.

"Do you know what? They wrote their names, all these great artists wrote their names for me on one of my white table-cloths. I have never washed it. Some day I shall have it photographed. What an advertisement, eh?"

Her kindness, however, was practical and her resources without end. At the confession of a day's intermittent but vain search for a newspaper, she sent some one out and had one back in a moment. On a question of Busseto's past she produced a regional guide-book and pressed its acceptance. On discovery that a visit to Sant' Agata was planned for the morning, she sent another legate forth who presently brought in a captive, very short, with legs not too straight, and coat-sleeves whose length all but denied



the very existence of hands. His shaggy eyebrows veiled the very contents of the eye's sockets and far from revealed any detail of color or luster. And he was Luigi, with his whip to identify him as *cocchiere*. Straightway Luigi democratically made one at table, and at the same time made a good bargain for the drive to the villa on the morrow. He departed only to return in a single movement to clinch the agreement "rain or shine," or the Italian equivalent of it.

Sant' Agata is but two miles north of Busseto, toward the Po, but, from a distance, all that identifies it, even to those who know the neighborhood, is a dense clump of trees rising out of the monotonous line of the Lombard Plain. Walls and thick leafage, even the dry bed of a canal like an abandoned moat, give it, on approach, a sense of aloofness, seclusion and a kind of brooding mystery.

Once inside the gates the visitor finds the characteristics which were suggested on approach are modified, though only slightly, by the ordered elegance of the charming shaded park, by the bright pebbled paths, by twin ponds which, according to the caretaker, meander irregularly into a semblance of the initials of the great maestro, and by the simplicity of the two-story house which reaches about extensively with no particular evidence of architectural design. Even an artificial cavern, near the water-

side, overplanted with shrubs and trees, which it amused Verdi to build and then to call "Aïda's Tomb," lessens the aloofness of Sant' Agata. The park was obviously the retreat of one who cherished solitude and peace, of an imaginative thinker, yet of one who loved order, pattern and ingenious elaboration if they created beauty.

The park itself, from which the tall trees exclude so much sunshine that in it one seems to be in a dense though ordered forest, stands in the midst of a vast flat acreage bare to the sun except where long parallel lines of poplars extend from this center like giant soldiers marching straight across the plain. The cultivation of these acres became the composer's hobby for the last thirty years of his life during which time his pen yielded only three operas.

The present owner of Sant' Agata has left everything in the house as Verdi knew it. The salons are numerous, large and distinguished, in spite of the fact that they are furnished with the opulent disorder so representative of a decoratively tasteless period.

His own workroom was the focus of interest, because here he wrote most of his nine later operas including: *Luisa Miller*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Aroldo*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *La Forza del Destino*, *Don Carlos*, *Otello* and *Falstaff* and, probably, *Macbeth* and *Aïda*.

Here, with its two overshelves, stood the spacious



### Busseto

The house in which Verdi first composed music and conducted an orchestra



Villa Sant' Agata, Verdi's later home where he wrote his later operas including Falstaff and Otello

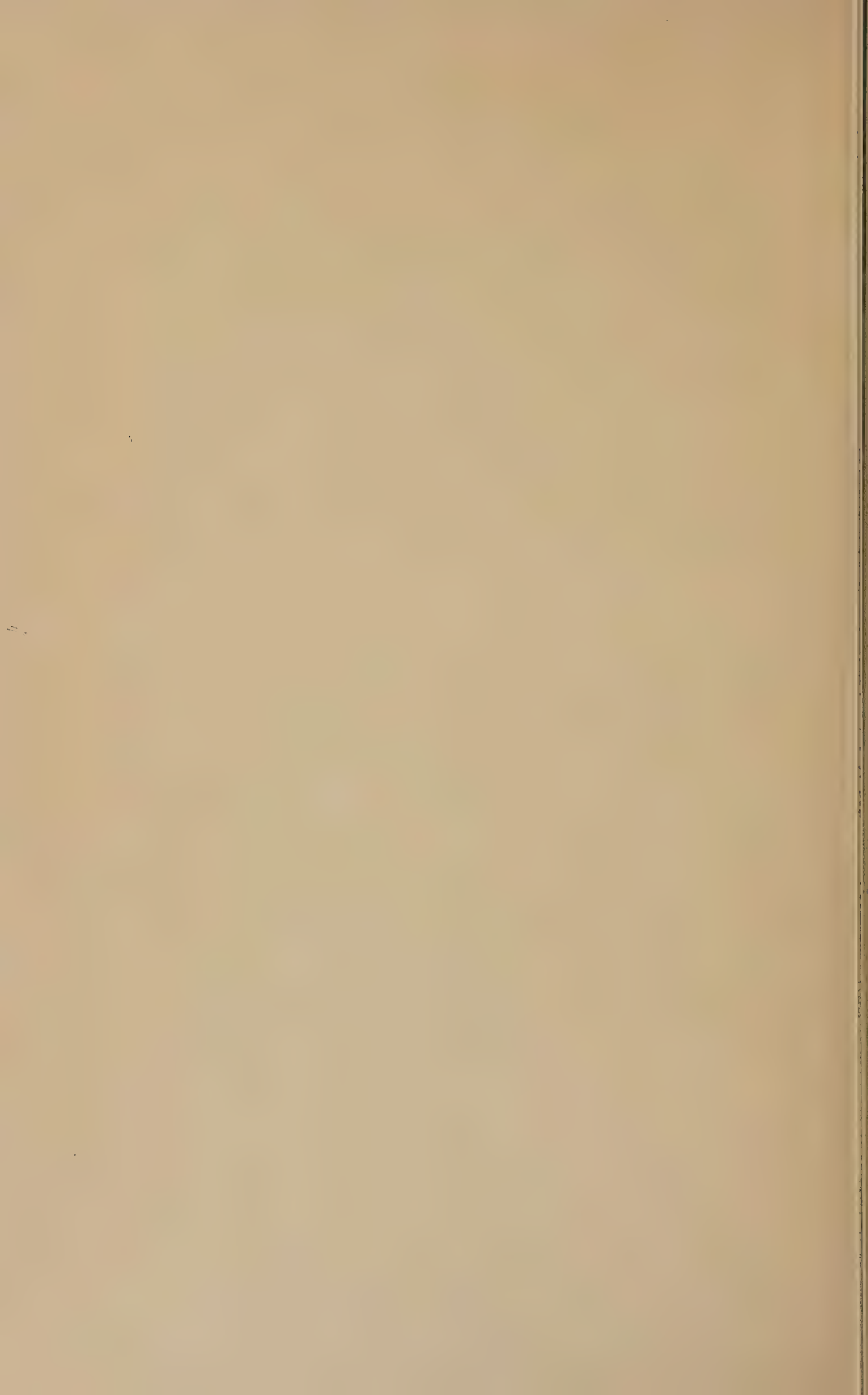


table on which he wrote the music of these works and near it the pianoforte to which he had recourse for assistance in expressing the nascent musical ideas. A portrait of his good father Barezzi seemed more significant here than any of the many other pictures. Under glass is the original autograph book of *Falstaff*, and pages of manuscript from the *Stabat Mater* and the *Requiem*. Under another glass are autographs of Manzoni, for whom Verdi had a devout and filial respect.

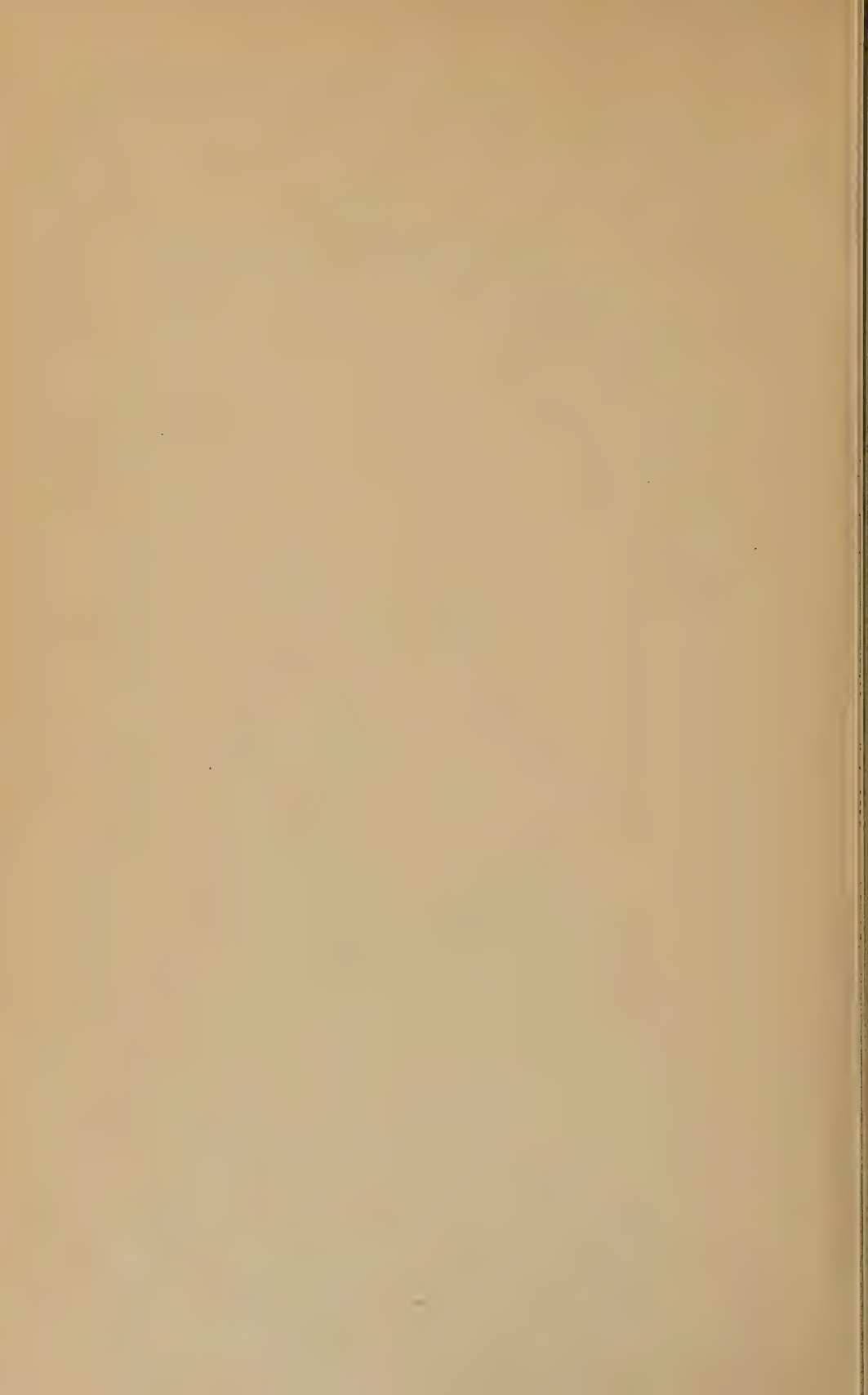
But in the midst of so much that expressed the mature man, the artist laureled by a whole world, nothing else here appeared so touchingly suggestive of the sentimental side of his nature as the presence, just as and where he preserved it, of the old spinet on which as a little boy he first practised in the cottage at Roncole. It is a shell of its former self, and even a part of that shell is gone. The fingerboard grins grotesquely like the jaw of a skull whose teeth are worn or have fallen out. To Verdi it must have been a treasure of rare significance, for in it he saw rather his earliest taskmaster and playmate, his first inspiration, the confidant, no doubt, of the whispered suggestions of later triumphant melodies.

THE END





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